DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 343 889 SP 033 696

AUTHOR	Mesa-Bains, Amalia; Shulman, Judith H.
TITLE	Teaching Diverse Students: Cases and Commentaries. Instructor's Guide.
INSTITUTION	Far West Lab. for Educational Research and Development, San Francisco, Calif.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Dec 91
CONTRACT	RP91-00-2006
NOTE	101p.; For casebook, see ED 328 552.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Case Studies; *Cultural Awareness; *Discussion (Teaching Technique); Elementary Secondary Education; Group Dynamics; Higher Education; Inner City; Inservice Teacher Education; *Multicultural Education; Preservice Teacher Education; Seminars; *Teacher Developed Materials; Teacher Workshops; Teaching Guides; *Urban Problems
IDENTIFIERS	*Situational Analysis

ABSTRACT

This instructor's guide has been developed to help teacher educators and staff developers use the cases in "Teaching Diverse Students: Cases and Commentaries" in preservice and inservice seminars. It promotes the use of discussion methods as a vehicle for engaging teachers and students in analysis of real-life situations. These teacher-written cases describe problems that all inner-city teachers face and bring to the surface many of the challenges of multiculturalism in the classroom. Often the narratives deal with culturally sensitive issues that are taboo to discuss in public. This volume provides an analysis of these issues and offers a structure for groups to discuss them in a safe and constructive environment. The guide is organized to help instructors facilitate case discussions. It begins with an introduction that offers general suggestions for preparing case analysis and examines effective group processes. The main section, "Teaching Notes," provides an in-depth analysis of each case and a suggested discussion outline. The teaching notes are designed to help facilitators prepare each case discussion and serves as a basis for narrative interpretation. Two tables are appended: the first compares background information of case contributors, and the second compares critical features across cases. (Author/LL)

****
*   Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made   *
*   from the original document.   *
****

SP

ED343889

Far West
LABORATORY

Teaching Diverse Students: Cases and Commentaries

Instructor's Guide

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
● Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

December 1991

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development
730 Harrison Street, San Francisco, CA 94107-1242 (415) 565-3000

TEACHING DIVERSE STUDENTS: CASES AND COMMENTARIES

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

by

Amalia Mesa-Bains
Judith H. Shulman

Far West Laboratory for Educational
Research and Development

December 30, 1991

This document is supported in part with funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Contract No. RP91-00-2006, and the San Francisco Foundation. The opinions expressed within do not necessarily reflect the position, policy, or endorsement of these institutions.

ABSTRACT

This volume has been developed to help teacher educators and staff developers use the cases in *Teaching Diverse Students: Cases and Commentaries* in preservice and inservice seminars. It promotes the use of discussion methods as a vehicle for engaging teachers and students in analysis of real-life situations. These teacher-written cases describe problems that all inner-city teachers face and bring to the surface many of the challenges of multiculturalism in the classroom. Often the narratives deal with culturally sensitive issues that are taboo to discuss in public. The *Instructor's Guide* provides an analysis of these issues and offers a structure for groups to discuss them in a safe and constructive environment.

The guide is organized to help instructors facilitate case discussions. It begins with an introduction that offers general suggestions for preparing case analyses and examines effective group processes. The main section, **Teaching Notes**, provides an in-depth analysis of each case and a suggested discussion outline. These teaching notes are designed to help facilitators prepare each case discussion and can serve as the basis for narrative interpretation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

PREPARATION AND PROCESS 2

RULES AND ROLES 5

STAGES AND STRUGGLES 8

TEACHING NOTES

A Case of *Ganas* 11

Moments of Truth and Teaching *Pygmalion* 17

Life Lesson 23

A Painful Reflection and Some Lessons Learned 27

Please, Not Another ESL Student 33

Fighting for Life in Third Period 37

A Difficult Year 45

Darius: I Hope He Makes It! 51

A Trip to Hell 57

From "Outsider" to Active Learner: Struggles in a Newcomer School 65

An Unanswered Dilemma 69

Opening Pandora's Box: The Mystery Behind an "Ideal Student" 75

Home Visits 81

APPENDIX

Table 1: Contributors to Casebook

Table 2: Features of Cases

INTRODUCTION

This Instructor's Guide has been developed to help teacher educators and staff developers use the cases in *Teaching Diverse Students: Cases and Commentaries* in preservice and inservice workshops and seminars. It promotes the use of discussion methods as a vehicle to engage teachers and students in an analysis of real-life situations in inner-city classrooms. These teacher-written cases describe problems that all teachers face who teach diverse youngsters and bring to the surface many of the challenges of multiculturalism in the classroom.

The multicultural issues in the narratives reflect the challenge that culture, race, class, gender and language bring to teachers in diverse settings. In recent years, that challenge has become more complicated. The ability to approach inter-cultural classroom life requires teachers to look at the new urban majorities where Latino and black or Chinese and Latino encounters are as powerful as our previous knowledge of white-black relations. These cases illuminate many of the new concerns.

The cases also deal with a range of culturally sensitive topics that are often taboo to address in teacher education programs and among staff at school sites. This *Instructor's Guide* provides an analysis of these sensitive issues and offers a structure for groups to discuss them in a safe and constructive manner. Since the cases have been written by veteran teachers, they provide an opportunity for other teachers to learn from experience. Discussion and analysis of critical moments in the narratives, through exploring many interpretations of the authors' dilemmas, may help new teachers anticipate similar concerns and make better judgments in their own classrooms. Site-based teachers can also gain new insights by comparing and relating the authors' problems to their own teaching experience. Hopefully, all teachers will become more sensitive to their diverse learners by understanding the cultural implications of these interpretations, and hence improve their teaching skills.

The guide is organized to help instructors facilitate case discussions. It begins with an **Introduction** that offers suggestions for preparing case analyses, tips for critically reading the cases, and an examination of group processes that can assist in understanding multicultural material. The introduction also identifies key roles in group development and supportive structures for effective group interaction.

The main section, **Teaching Notes**, provides an in-depth analysis of each case and a suggested discussion outline. The teaching notes are designed to help facilitators prepare each case discussion, and can serve as the foundation for narrative interpretation.

The **Appendix** consists of two tables that analyze information across cases. Table 1 compares background information of all of the case contributors—teacher-authors and commentators. Table 2 compares the critical features across the cases. These tables supplement material in the teaching notes and can help instructors build a case-based curriculum and/or select individual cases to fit a particular topic.

PREPARATION AND PROCESS

Preparing for a case discussion requires an understanding of both the issues embedded in each case and the importance of group process. This section will provide suggestions for how to build a case-based curriculum, read and analyze each case, frame each case discussion, and develop a group climate safe enough for critical inquiry.

Building a Case-Based Curriculum

Ideally, these case discussions will be part of a case-based multicultural curriculum that includes additional readings about the issues described in each case. In creating this kind of curriculum, you must consider both your purposes for using each case and the sequence of case discussions that will build cultural knowledge and sensitivity. You should also consider the particular needs and interests of your group and the complexity of each case. When we piloted the casebook with groups of teachers, we realized that some cases, particularly those that deal with bias, race and class, generated more explosive interactions. These case discussions can polarize opinions and create defensive assumptions that may be handled more easily after the group has established trust. The teaching notes indicate which cases are emotionally provocative and will alert you to possible difficulties during a discussion.

The Reading

Preparing to teach each case requires multiple readings. First, read to develop an initial impression. What excites you? What bothers you? Who did you relate to? Your first impression can be a diagnostic tool to gauge your values and empathic response to the case. It may also be key to understanding the participant's starting point during each discussion.

Additional analytical readings of the case reveal new information and understanding. As you read each case, ask yourself, "What is this a case of?" and "What are the different ways to interpret this case?", because the cases usually have many layers of meaning. Also note how the teacher uses descriptors, key phrases and dialogue to describe the events and his or her students. Often, the writer reveals racial and cultural perceptions—even apprehensions and hesitancies—in the introduction of the case.

As you proceed through the reading, notice pressure points or events that cause stress. These may be instances when a teacher is confronted by angry students, doubt and remorse about her actions, or a puzzling dilemma. Teachable moments can occur while discussing these events. For example, in "Moments of Truth and Teaching *Pygmalion*," a crisis is followed by a catharsis for the teacher and her students. If you can provoke teachers to explore different interpretations of this event, they may be able to understand why the crisis occurred and prevent a similar ordeal in their own classrooms.

Cases like the potentially explosive "Fighting for Life in Third Period" may even require paragraph by paragraph notation. These cases raise strong racial issues and require the examination of subtle details and perceptions of both teachers and students. But the racial, cultural and gender nuances may be less obvious in other cases. You may have to read between the lines to understand references to these issues, such as in descriptions of socio-economic, political or historical information. Cultural material may also be embedded in student descriptions, community activities, student language, and family roles described in the case.

Layers of commentaries. The cases in this volume have two components: a teacher-authored narrative and at least two commentaries by educators who represent different points of view–new and experienced teachers, administrators, teacher educators, and educational scholars. These commentaries are meant to enrich the analyses of each case by adding multiple, often conflicting, interpretations, not to provide "correct" answers to dilemmas posed and questions raised in the narratives.

The commentaries often clarify cultural issues not addressed by the case writer. In some respects, the commentaries act as expert testimony or even cultural witnesses. Authors may examine how cultural values may have influenced teaching episodes and/or teacher-student encounters. They may also provide important contextual information for events in the narratives. Consequently, facilitators can use the commentaries to expand a reader's understanding of complex issues or to serve as counterpoints to interpretations of a case.

How and when to use commentaries can affect the discussions. Should they be read at the same time as the original case? Or should they be read only after the original case has been analyzed to encourage independent thought? There is no simple answer or rule of thumb for this decision. It must be made on a case-by-case basis depending on the individual case and the purpose for teaching it. At times, both cases and commentaries may be read together to avoid a discussion that might deteriorate into an "opinion swap" without the additional perspectives. On other occasions, the commentaries may be read after an examination of the original case to preserve the original analysis.

Teaching notes. How do the teaching notes fit into your preparations? They were designed to examine key issues–particularly those dealing with race, culture, gender, and language–and to help you plan each case discussion. Together with their suggested discussion outlines, these analytic interpretations may alert you to potential problems that may arise in each case. They can also help you gauge how to use the commentaries most effectively.

Process

Preparing for case discussions not only requires an analytic reading of each case, but also a consideration of how to develop a safe climate within the group. Any discussion group brings with it the personal experiences, values and attitudes of its individual members as well as their conscious and unconscious beliefs. The establishment of a productive, positive climate of trust will reduce the anxiety of individuals reluctant to expose their opinion and/or have their opinion judged.

Many factors contribute to the development of group life: the physical setting, use of space, seating arrangement, and facilitator's style of leading discussions, and group size.[1] Perhaps most important in these multicultural case discussions, however, is the life experiences of group members. Existing histories at school sites, unspoken concerns, fears of racist perceptions, absence of cultural information, dominant status in the group, even political agendas can and often do make their way into the discussion. Consequently, the clearer the structure and the more secure the facilitator, the more likely the case discussion will be effective.

Whenever possible, it is helpful to have culturally and racially balanced discussion groups so that participants can learn from one another. When groups are homogeneous and have similar life experiences, it is difficult for facilitators to engage the participants in an analysis of different cultural perspectives. Other problems can develop when groups are dominated by one or two ethnic groups. Facilitators must ensure that the few minority members are not marginalized, and be sensitive to those who may not be comfortable assuming the role of expert witness.

In summary, the primary goal of these multicultural case discussions is to explore as many possible interpretations of the case, while fostering the understanding of the culturally diverse implications for these interpretations. Realizing this goal requires a combination of carefully prepared readings of cases and commentaries, inclusive questioning styles, and stated rules and roles for group process.

---

[1] Though larger groups can be accommodated, the ideal number ranges from 9 to 14 to encourage open and uniform participation.

RULES AND ROLES

What are some of those ground rules that lead to a positive group climate? How should discussion leaders operate in their role as facilitators? Are there any tips for encouraging cross-cultural analysis? For leading case discussions? These are some of the questions that will be addressed in this section, beginning with some suggestions for the first day.

The facilitator. Facilitators must consider many things when they lead case discussions, beginning with initiating a comfortable climate for dealing with sensitive issues. One of the important aspects of this is to ensure that participants understand the purpose of the seminar. The list below represents our goals:

- To analyze and explore multiple interpretations of embedded issues in cases
- To develop a repertoire of strategies to deal with these issues
- To improve understanding of multicultural issues–bias, race, class, ethnicity and gender–that arise in classrooms and schools
- To enable teachers to reflect on their feelings about teaching diverse youngsters
- To connect issues embedded in the cases with personal teaching situations
- To develop collegiality and a shared understanding among discussion participants

Equally important is to ensure that participants overcome the notion that there is only one acceptable way to analyze each case. Rather, we aim to foster an ethos of critical inquiry that encourages multiple interpretations, conflicting opinions, and equal participation. The following list of ground rules may help set the stage for this kind of discourse:

- Respect each member's contribution and point-of-view.
- Do not interrupt! Wait for speakers to finish their statements before responding.
- Provide equal opportunity for all members to contribute.
- Do not monopolize the discussion.

In supporting these safeguards, facilitators will find it important to engage in the following behaviors:

- [To ensure equal opportunity of participation] keep track of the order of those who want to speak.
- Encourage non-participatory members to contribute.
- Delicately curtail those who dominate.
- Intermittently synthesize key ideas during the discussion.
- Assist in clarifying ideas when misunderstood.
- Model courtesy and respect at all times.
- Remind participants of ground rules when they are disregarded.

For this multicultural case-based seminars, facilitators must also engage participants in cross-cultural analysis such as:

- Identifying any information in the details, setting, characterization, dialogue, etc. of the case related to race, culture, class, language, gender
- Discussing all possible interracial/intercultural perceptions
- Using the commentaries to introduce specific cultural knowledge that has not voluntarily surfaced
- Going beyond acknowledging intercultural issues such as racism and analyze their forms, roots, and causes
- Engaging participants in an open exchange of cultural knowledge

Leading the Discussion

The skills and emphasis on group process is only part of the facilitator's role. Your chief activity is leading a substantive and constructive case discussion.

The opening. How does a case discussion begin? This is an important consideration because your opening questions may influence how a discussion will proceed. Several approaches can be used. One technique is to ask one or two people to summarize what actually happened in the case, and then ask others to join the discussion. Another is to ask each participant to name one key event or issue in the case before allowing others to respond. This method provides a useful opportunity to assess the range of individual interpretations before beginning a discussion.

Questioning techniques. Your ability to effectively facilitate these case discussions relies on your knowledge of the narratives and your repertoire of questioning techniques. The typology of questions on the following page can be a useful general guide and can alert you to the variety of possible questions. However, we have found that the most constructive questions are directed specifically to each case. You can find a suggested question outline in each teaching note.

Ethos of inquiry. One of the most important components of constructive case discussions is the facilitator's ability to establish an ethos of critical inquiry rather than simply an exchange of personal opinion. Discussion leaders often walk a narrow line. On the one hand, they want to examine certain issues in the case and have prepared a discussion outline. On the other hand, they must be flexible and allow members to address their own concerns and describe their own experiences. Relating important issues to their own classrooms helps teachers situate what they learn and strengthen their understanding. To compound the complexities, some participants may identify with the author's problems so strongly that they are uncomfortable when others criticize the teacher, especially when they label the teacher a racist. Without support and careful guidance from sensitive facilitators, such participants may decide to quit rather than take part in painful encounters.

The challenge of case-based teaching is that each discussion is different and takes on a life of its own. Remember, your role is to provoke, inform, and provide equal opportunities to contribute, not to indoctrinate. However, sometimes this is easier said then done (see Stages and Struggles section, below). At times the discussion may appear at an impasse or participants ignore key cultural information. One of the ways of shifting discussion topics is to refer to quotes from the case and/or commentaries and move the discussion from there. Another is to present a mini-lecture on the material, based on the commentaries, teaching notes, and other scholarly articles.[2] And a third tactic is to incorporate activities such as role-playing and/or structured small group activities, which often offer a welcome change of pace.

Closing the case. One of the biggest challenges for facilitators is deciding how to help participants synthesize and reflect on what they learned in the discussion. This process should enable participants to step back from exploring details in a case and consider new insights and/or unresolved questions from a larger perspective. It should provide an opportunity to note new understandings, conflicts, and unresolved questions.

---

[2] Be cautious with this approach! It may be difficult to shift between didactic and interactive approaches.

TYPOLOGY OF QUESTIONS

Open-ended questions:	What are your reactions to the case about the teacher who cried in front of her students? What aspects of the problem were of greatest interest to you?
Diagnostic questions:	What is your analysis of the problem? What conclusions can you draw from the data?
Information-seeking questions:	What is the range of reading test scores in your class this year?
Challenge (testing questions):	Why do you believe that? What evidence supports your conclusion? What arguments can be developed to counter that point of view?
Action questions:	What needs to be done to implement the plans in the teacher's planning book?
Questions on priority and sequence:	Given the failure of Mr. Hanson' smartest students, what is the first step to be taken? The second? And the third?
Prediction questions:	If your conclusions are correct, what might be the reactions of your students?
Hypothetical questions:	What would have happened if Ms. Masterson had not asked her mentor for help? Would Bart have succeeded if he had not been appointed as leader in his group?
Questions of extension:	What are the implications of your conclusions about why half the class failed to show up for their performance?
Questions of generalization:	Based on your study of the computer and telecommunications industry, what do you consider to be the major forces that enhance technological innovation?

Adapted from C. R. Christensen et al., *Education for Judgement: The Artistry of Discussion Leadership.* Boston: Harvard University Press, 1991.

One approach is to ask participants to spend a few minutes writing about what they learned from the discussion. Sample questions may include: What new insights did you gain from this case discussion? Do you have any new questions or old ones that remain unresolved? What parts of the discussion did you find most challenging? How can you relate what we discussed to your own experience?

Another is to divide the group into pairs and ask them to share what they learned with one another. They might also relate what was discussed to their own experience and brainstorm what to do differently. After the pairs meet for a few minutes, bring the group back together and ask one member from each pair to share key ideas about what they discussed.

A third tactic is simply to go around the room and ask individuals to share any new insights or understandings, and record this information. Sometimes facilitators like to compare the new information to the group's initial analysis. Others may bring in insights from previous discussions.

STAGES AND STRUGGLES

All groups go through a series of struggles enroute to developing a climate of trust. The purpose of this section is to alert facilitators to some of the developmental, group dynamic, and cross-cultural factors that are involved in conducting a case-based multicultural seminar.

Stage I

You will probably find that the individuals most accustomed and comfortable with speaking out will dominate the first few sessions. Thus it is critical to encourage the more hesitant members to join the conversation to demonstrate your commitment of providing equal opportunity. You may have to draw in some individuals by ensuring a climate nonjudgmental enough for differing opinions and convictions.

Creating a non-judgmental climate is not easy. Pay attention to body language that reflects reluctance to participate, discomfort, alienation, resistance, and hostility. Also be aware of the tendency to address questions to one side of the group or to particularly responsive participants, and try to establish contact with the quiet individuals.

One final tip: be sensitive to participants whose interaction styles avoid direct confrontation as well as those who enjoy it. There are conversation styles that are often associated with particular ethnic groups. For example, some might argue that Asian women are more likely to have introverted, less aggressive styles of participation, while African-American men are more outspoken. Yet your responsibility as facilitator is to engage all of the quieter members of the group in the conversation, whatever their ethnic group or gender. The quiet black male needs to be involved in the discussion just as much as the quiet Asian woman. The same is true for recent immigrants whose command of English may be limited.

Stage II

As facilitators grow more comfortable and leadership within the group emerges, groups begin to coalesce. Conflicts that occur between individual members of the group may usually be resolved through applying the guidelines of group behavior and/or special effort by the facilitator. Nonetheless, clashes between minority and non-minority members that originate in a case analysis of racial and ethnic issues may develop into personal confrontations between certain participants. Moreover, if the group has a history of association, like the faculty of a school, there may be a residue of historic differences. Some members may have a tendency to cast the minority members in an expert witness category without realizing they may be uncomfortable in that role. On the other hand, non-minority members may have substantial intercultural experiences that are being disregarded. Setting a climate to prevent these controversies or handling the schism after it occurs demands a combination of skills and candor. During personal confrontations, it may help to return to the case and re-examine the issues in the narrative to diffuse the emotions expressed among group members.

Stage III

By the time groups reach Stage III, members have internalized the ground rules and differences of opinion are more easily tolerated. When this happens, other models of case analysis may be introduced, such as pair or small-group activities, role playing critical moments, writing personal commentaries on a case, and rewriting the case ending.

Attaining this level rests on the facilitator's ability to develop group cohesion, tolerance for differences, and respect for different styles of communication. In the final analysis, however, an effective facilitator must also be able to conduct substantive and constructive case discussions where members apply what they learn to their own teaching situations.

TEACHING NOTES

Teaching Note

A CASE OF GANAS

Introduction

Ganas is a Spanish word for desire or will and is an appropriate title for this story of an earnest Mexican-American girl struggling to write a story, whose efforts are matched by her dedicated teacher. Although the young girl's motivation is high, the teacher is well aware of the expressive problems in the student's writing. The teacher's dilemma rests in her desire to respect the student's wish to compete in a writing contest and the high demands this places on her to provide individualized support, proofreading and corrections. The touching sincerity of Amparo's family story and the implications of her Spanish-speaking background raise cultural and linguistic questions about this student. But it seems the largest theme emerges from the teacher's feeling of frustration and sense of failure in making a real breakthrough for the student.

Context

Amparo, like many other Mexican-American students living in the Southwest, must realize her learning potential within a context of historic disenfranchisement and discrimination. We know little of her immigrant history, but the case indicates she is part of a sizeable Latino community whose residents often live in barrios. The struggle with bilingualism and biculturalism can be a creative force as well as a social challenge for youngsters like Amparo.

Beset by second language problems that are poorly assessed in schools and with little available English language support at home because few family members have completed their own schooling, it is no wonder that the drop-out rate for Latino students is the highest in the nation. Amparo's *ganas*, or desire, is remarkable in and of itself when we consider her obstacles. The teacher doesn't seem to recognize the pattern of errors in the writing or what it may have to do with her Spanish-speaking background. In addition, her schooling history is vague, she misses the class screening, and little seems to be known of her learning problems. Despite her presence in the U.S. for some time, it is possible that she is part of a growing number of English Dominant Language Minority (EDLM) students, or more precisely, students who use English but never master English structures, yet no longer can be expressive or literate in their first language. These students often have characteristics of language mixing, poor comprehension, and serious writing problems despite the fact that they are socially fluent in English. This condition can exist for several generations in a family, particularly in areas where strong bilingual programs are not available.

Often, EDLM students who are socially fluent in English don't qualify for bilingual services and fall between the cracks, with little or no recognition of their problems. Because their use of English is at a superficial level, it lacks the deep constructs of English mastery that provide more complex use of English in problem solving, contextual reading, and interpretive expression. Consequently, these students are locked out of much of the more linguistically sophisticated exchanges in the classroom.

Amparo's problems with "gibberish" in her writing may in fact be the result of a combination of English-as-a-second-language transfer from Spanish in combination with some learning disabilities. We know from her writing that in her other school she was once in a "special class." Interestingly, the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund has documented large numbers of Spanish-speaking children who have been placed in special education classes because of the lack of Spanish-speaking assessment.

This absence of Spanish language psychometrics has allowed large-scale misassessment of Latino students to continue. The wholesale placement of Spanish-speaking students in special education classes for the learning disabled is often the result of testing delivered in English to Spanish language speakers. Conversely, a student like Amparo could have real special education needs that will go unattended. Without sufficient Spanish language special education assessment, understanding of EDLM, and bilingual support, students like Amparo struggle alone against tremendous odds to be expressive.

Segments of the Discussion

This discussion relies on looking at both the teacher's needs and the student's needs. Participants should be encouraged to share their own knowledge of writing and second language issues.

What Do We Know About the Teacher?

It's evident that the teacher has a dedicated attitude toward working with her students and is willing to put in the extra time to support their special needs. Nonetheless, she continues to work with Amparo without really knowing about her learning problems as she attempts to help her complete her project. It is clear the project and competition have great importance for Amparo, but the teacher seems to feel the only way to work with her is on a one-to-one basis.

As the teacher describes her demanding role as editor and support for Amparo, it becomes clear that her model for writing doesn't include peer strategies and that she is extremely concerned with grammatical and spelling errors. While we know that the competition requires correct presentation, we can't help but wonder why in the earlier stages she doesn't encourage peer pairing and strategies of creative writing. Even the retitling of Amparo's essay indicates the teacher's involvement was well-meaning yet somewhat problematic. The approach to limited-English proficient students in creative writing often relies on a more open and correction-free development at the beginning. Participants should be encouraged to brainstorm alternative models for this challenging task.

There are also questions as to how much the teacher controlled the nature of Amparo's writing. The change in title and the change in focus when writing about her family may be more indicative of what the teacher expected than of what the student wanted. Despite her references to Amparo's potential learning problem, we find the teacher returning to descriptions of "serious mechanical problems" and words like "gibberish," which reflect some lack of understanding on her part. Could she have sought help for Amparo from a bilingual teacher? Could she have responded to Amparo with another kind of support besides editing?

What Do We Know About the Student?

This young student demonstrates a creative will to succeed in the most difficult of situations. Her desire to enter the contest reflects her need to excel and produce. Yet, we sense that something else drives her to write. It's as if the writing itself clears up the meaning of what is happening to her. Struggling as all adolescents do with her own identity, the writing perhaps served as a way to explain herself. In the epilogue, her writings reveal this coming-of-age as she describes her "presentation" or *quinceañera*, the coming-out party for 15-year-olds common to Mexican communities. We learn something of Amparo's cultural setting when we read her description of family life. Her vignette reminds us of the primary values surrounding family life, the role of the father, and the expectations for girls frequently seen among Mexican families. Simultaneously, we read her passage in which she remembers her sense of inadequacy at her other school when she was in a "special class." Like many girls her age, she balances her feelings of young womanhood with her concerns about her competency and worth.

Amparo's reflections–like a story within a story–present to us a strong cultural identity rooted in shared family values. There is a wisdom to Amparo's thoughts about her family, their roles, and her neighborhood. Yet despite the teacher's awareness of Amparo's cultural reflections, the teacher seems to center on the problems she finds in Amparo's writing process itself. Could the teacher have responded to Amparo's writing differently? What was Amparo trying to achieve with her writing?

The Language Riddle

Throughout the narrative, the teacher focuses on the "mechanical errors" and seems consumed with the notion that Amparo's improvement is hopeless or at best limited. She begins her story by stating that Amparo wasn't even following phonetic patterns of sound in her spelling, as though the sign of phonetic spelling would indicate the promise or potential for remediation. Instead, it was all "gibberish." But upon closer examination, we find that Amparo's spelling is phonetic–Spanish phonetics applied to English. In the epilogue passages we find consistent vowels, consonants, and consonant endings characteristic to the Spanish language. Even the B for V transposition permissable in Spanish is apparent in the word "faborit" (favorite). Even sentence boundaries characteristic to English are customarily different, as Spanish allows for sentence structure with modifiers and adverbial clauses that produce what we would call run-on sentences. What we find in Amparo's writing is the tendency in bilingual speakers to transpose Spanish language syntax and structure in their English language usage. Once again, had the linguistically diverse information been available to the teacher, her very first impression, and perhaps her expectations of Amparo, might have been quite different.

Closure

We begin the story impressed with Amparo's tenacity and end the story impressed with the teacher's endurance. Before closing the discussion, ask the participants to examine alternatives for working with Amparo. Perhaps there may have been more effective ways for teacher and student to have worked together.

Suggested Discussion Outline

1. What were the major language/culture issues in the case?

2. After the issues are raised, what further information must be considered?
   Probes:
   a. What do we know about Amparo's background?
   b. What were the teacher's reasons for approaching the student support as she did?
   c. What were the teacher's expectations of Amparo? Why?

3. What was the teacher's perceptions of the student?
   Probes:
   a. How did she see the language problems?
   b. What did she know about Amparo?
   c. What else would she have needed to know?

   d. What were the teacher's needs?
   e. What might have happened if she had sought bilingual help?

4. What does the case tell us about the cultural setting?
   Probes:
   a. What are the language issues for Amparo and her family?
   b. What does Amparo's paper tell us about her hopes and dreams?
   c. What do we know about other Mexican-American students that might pertain to Amparo's situation?
   d. What are some of the issues for teaching writing to LEPs?
   e. What was Amparo trying to achieve with her writing?

5. How might this teacher have dealt with other ways to assist Amparo in her writing?
   Probes:
   a. What other models exist for creative writing?
   b. Would peer strategies have worked?
   c. What would the risks and consequences have been to using new strategies?
   d. Using Kawazoe's commentary, what could the teacher have done differently?

6. What does the Epilogue tell us?
   Probes:
   a. About Amparo?
   b. About the teacher?

7. What have we learned from Amparo's story?
   Probes:
   a. What are some guiding principles?
   b. What cultural knowledge was gained?

Teaching Note

MOMENTS OF TRUTH AND TEACHING PYGMALION

Introduction

The case begins with a veteran teacher from an urban high school presenting a lesson on George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* to her English class. Despite her conviction that she has confronted her own racial discomforts, we find the teacher anxiously preparing for difficulties she anticipates in presenting the lesson in an inoffensive manner. She struggles to maintain an impersonal context for her largely non-white students from poor communities while teaching *Pygmalion*'s themes of social inequality, perceptions of appearances, and personal identity. The teacher is challenged by her students for using references to their personal backgrounds and neighborhoods in an insensitive way. As she is confronted by a student she finds menacing, the teacher finds herself facing the situation she sought to avoid in her impersonal context. Ironically, she receives help in solving her problem from another student.

The case deals with her response to confrontation, the involvement of her students, and broader issues of curricula, cultural sensitivity and relevance. The teacher's conclusions about her encounters with the lesson on *Pygmalion* leave us with many questions, while the case commentaries focus on missed opportunities as well as race/class issues in the learning situation. Ultimately, the case focuses on the power of student reality–whether to control it or enlist it.

(**Caution:** This case is quite complex and might be better served toward the end of a seminar.)

Context

After teaching in this inner-city high school for over eight years, this Anglo teacher still expresses a hesitancy about dealing with racial issues. Her own personal background is rural and mainly white. The students she describes are poor and 85 percent non-white. She perceives the students as having deficient home environments, but sees herself as able to make a difference.

Perhaps one of the most telling aspects of the disparity between the teacher's idealism and the students' realism is her early belief that she is color blind, oblivious to student race. Later her recognition of her own racism seems to give way to change, and we are struck by how her shifting realizations about race may affect the classroom lesson.

Segments of the Discussion

The importance of the interpersonal setting for instruction requires us to look at beliefs and experiences held by both teacher and students. What could have been some of the vulnerable points in the teaching of *Pygmalion* because of these differences in belief and experience? What were the critical incidences in the teaching of the lesson? How could they have been done differently? Could the teacher have made use of student reality rather than trying to distance it from her lesson?

What Do We Know About the Teacher?

The teacher alternately reveals both color blindness and prejudice. She reflects on earlier discomforts with black students, but regards them as resolved. Yet her extreme preparation, sleepless nights, and fear of conflict might indicate otherwise. She tries to use the curriculum guide and the popular film version, "My Fair Lady," to help her in presenting Shaw's play in a more relevant light. Clearly, this teacher is willing to work hard to draw her students into the play.

But once again, her recognition of race and class differences brings her struggle to the surface. She is concerned that their own reality is too far afield from the setting of the classic *Pygmalion*, while fearful that its themes would be too close and might offend students. We get a sense that her fear of conflict guides her decisions on the thematic application of the lesson. She feels that the material is inappropriate, yet she tries to draw relevancy for her students, acknowledging that language is a problem, but failing to note the real complexity for black students well-acquainted with language discrimination.

What Do We Know About the Students?

The students in this class are economically at poverty level and dealing with the harsh realities of an urban setting. As black students in an urban environment, they may also speak non-standard English and be aware of the class discrepancies between the poor and the middle class. With this in mind, what could their associations be to the teacher's study questions: "Why do you think people often base their impressions of others on the way they speak? What is the contrast between upper and lower classes in the play? What is the relationship between class and language, the way a person speaks, and his or her identity?" How could these questions have been situated so that students could use them in a relevant way without being offended? The students' life-world offers the teacher a rich basis by which she can extend the lesson as well as help them deal with the inequities they are so well aware of.

The Use of the Classic

The difficulty of presenting classic literature in the changing multiculturalism of urban schools has begun to challenge teachers concerned with life-relevant curriculum. The teaching of *Pygmalion* is part of the larger search for appropriate curriculum and sensitive instructional practices for diverse students. Currently, there is great controversy over culturally diverse textbooks and life-relevant curriculum in the inner-city schools. Educators are struggling to find a blend of both Western and non-Western contributions in a classroom curriculum. In this case, could George Bernard Shaw's classic have offered an opportunity to approach both diversity and Western literature together?

In such a culturally diverse setting, the teacher's attempt to make an English classic approachable turns out to be a complex undertaking. Ultimately, the teacher relies on the concepts in the curriculum guide, while attempting to use the film as an entry point that is more understandable. Unfortunately, the film does not emphasize the satire so key to Shaw's biting critique of England's class issues and therefore does not help the teacher prepare the students to bridge their community issues with the characters' setting in the play. *Pygmalion* offers a vehicle for relating contemporary issues facing students of diversity to similar concerns from another historic period. Shaw's satire examines the British upper classes and the cockney-speaking underclass through the story of a professor refashioning the belligerent flower girl, Eliza. The professor's high-handed attempts to refine her language and behavior bring up questions of social equality and appearances.

These three key ideas of social equality, appearances, and identity are significant to the students in this class. It is important to remember that high schoolers are completing adolescence as they form their personal and social identities. They are hypersensitive to injustice, self-consciousness, and embarrassment. Consequently, *Pygmalion*'s themes of social inequality, perception of appearances, and personal identity are extremely sensitive for racially and culturally diverse adolescents.

By not providing a forum for exploring these ideas with a context for the students, the teacher may have inadvertently caused what she most feared–confrontation. She didn't realize how powerful her students' beliefs and experiences were and only touched upon them through her questions about the character Eliza. The commentary of Ladson-Billings remarks on the misapplication of the themes and the teacher's missed opportunity. The Desser commentary takes the issue of black language further and even suggests student activities, while providing a bibliography for teacher knowledge.

The Retrospective View

The honesty and directness of the teacher in handling the confrontation is effective, but her reflections are troubling. She comes to some curricular conclusions about the use of the film and key ideas, but her assessment of the students is still flawed. She wants to avoid personal identification with the characters, but plans to explore the social themes and how they relate to their lives. Her beliefs about honest communication seems at odds with her fear of personalizing and distance.

How could she use the students' personal context to move them toward examining the critical issues in their own situation? How could she come to terms with their creative language and the language discrimination so thematic to the story? Could she begin with the same key ideas but present them differently to ready the students for the play? How could she help them to see how closure of these issues of class, discrimination and change occur in other societies and histories through this classic play?

Closure

The encounter between student experience, teacher expectation and a mandated curriculum offers a model for the challenge of urban education. There are many ways the teacher could have proceeded, and the discussion should allow for all the options.

Suggested Discussion Outline

Setting: How to teach classics in diverse settings.

1. What are the key elements in this case?

2. The story begins with an encounter with a student who asks the teacher, "How does it feel to be a minority?"
   Probes:
   a. What was the student really saying?
   b. What do we learn from the teacher's response? What were her biases?
   c. Why do you think she began the story here?

3. What was the teacher's chief concern in the teaching of *Pygmalion*?
   Probes:
   a. What was she anxious about?
   b. Why did she decide to create an impersonal context?
   c. What were the pros and cons of using the curriculum guide and the film?

4. Let's talk about the moment of confrontation, when the student challenged the teacher to present her neighborhood.
   Probes:
   a. What leads up to it?
   b. How could the teacher have handled it?
   c. What would have been the risks and consequences?
   d. What were the students trying to tell her?

   e. What did she fail to understand? (See Ladson-Billings' discussion on the distance between the students' lives and the teacher's.)

5. Let's look at it from the students' point of view.

   Probes:

   a. How do you think they would have wanted *Pygmalion* to be taught?
   b. How could their experience have been bridged to the characters in the play?
   c. What do you think was the most compelling part of the play?
   d. What kind of activity could have prepared the students to begin the play?
   e. Discuss Desser's alternative instructional practices and the concept of cultural dominance.

6. If we were going to rewrite the ending of the story, what would be our conclusion?

   Probes:

   a. Do you agree of disagree with the teacher's conclusions?
   b. Did she understand the issues of relevancy, impersonal teaching and differentiating from characters?
   c. What was the teacher's confusion?

7. What did you learn from this case?

   Probes:

   a. What principles would you consider when teaching classic literature to diverse learners?
   b. What principles would you consider when preparing a lesson for difficult situations?

Teaching Note

LIFE LESSON

Introduction

This case is about a third grade teacher's unsuccessful attempt to create a lesson that would raise her inner-city students' sense of self worth. The activity involved a self-discovery lesson with a mirror and a guessing game, during which each child was supposed to realize that he or she was "a very important person." But the youngsters didn't understand the point of the lesson. What went wrong? Why weren't the children able to relate the teacher's questions about important people to themselves? Does telling children that they are important help some believe it?

Incorporating this case analysis with readings on the developmental stages of growth (e.g., Piaget) would provide a useful theoretical context for discussing this case. Mesa-Bains' commentary uses this framework in her remarks. Foley Reynolds, a teacher who tries other approaches to raise her students' self esteem, offers a practical perspective to what went wrong.

Context

This case takes place in an ethnically diverse, inner-city school. Most of the students come from single-parent, low-income families who live in project housing. The teacher-author notes that her class reflects "the struggles of young, mostly immigrant families, trying to survive in today's big city." As the daughter of Asian immigrants herself, the teacher strongly identifies with their plight.

Segments of the Discussion

Facilitators may want to frame this session around the influence of the developmental stages of growth on learning. After reviewing what the developmental stages are, ask if the lesson in this case appears to be developmentally appropriate for third graders. Why or why not? What were the teacher's goals for the lesson? What actually happened? How did the children respond?

What Do We Know About the Teacher?

As a daughter of Asian immigrants, this teacher identifies strongly with most of her students whose families struggle to survive in "today's big city." Even from the meager personal description about her background, we can hypothesize that this teacher cares a great deal about the students in her class. "I was sick of seeing students with low self esteem and I wanted so badly to do something about it." She also tries to find out about their home life. For example, she knows that Nathan, the child selected to take the first peek in the mystery box, was "the oldest of four boys from a modest home."

We can also hypothesize that this teacher constantly reflects on her teaching–trying to understand why some lessons are more successful than others. Though she initially blamed her failure on her student's deficiencies, such as limited English or difficult family situations, she also took responsibility for her lack of success. Evidence of this is her search for help from her principal and peers as she retraced what happened. When she tried the lesson again, she was both more prepared for their reactions and more realistic about how much she could accomplish in a single lesson.

What Do We Know About the Students?

As noted above, most of the students come from single-parent, low-income families who live in project housing; many of the families have recently immigrated to this country. At what developmental stage are these children? Mesa-Bains points out in her commentary that these students can grasp concrete ideas, but they generally cannot understand abstract concepts (please refer to her commentary). In this particular lesson, the students appear to be in a transition stage. Though they can relate the concept of "importance" to influential adults, they cannot relate the concept to themselves. Clearly they do not believe that their importance can be compared to that of more famous persons.

Analysis of the Lesson

Is this lesson appropriate for third graders? How useful was the direct approach? Mesa-Bains notes that providing opportunities for experiencing competence and independence might contribute more to the students' sense of self worth than trying to help the students perceive their importance. Foley Reynolds also questions whether the students have enough English understanding and background knowledge to make this lesson meaningful and offers an alternative approach (please refer to her commentary).

Perhaps this teacher-author provided follow-up activities on this topic during the year, because it appears that at least one student, Denise, demonstrated her knowledge of the objectives from the quoted excerpt in her journal.

What are some alternate approaches to improving students' self esteem? What are the risks and consequences for each approach? This would be a good opportunity for participants to share their own experiences.

Closure

Facilitators should provide an opportunity for participants to synthesize what they have learned. Perhaps they can generalize some principles for assessing whether a particular lesson appears developmentally appropriate and meaningful for particular groups of students.

Suggested Discussion Outline

1. What were the facts of this case?
   Probes:
   a. What were the teacher's objectives for the lesson?
   b. What actually happened?
   c. How did the teacher feel about the failure of her lesson?
   d. What did she do about it?

2. What do we know about this teacher?
   Probes:
   a. Ethnic background?
   b. Caring for students?
   c. Reflection on her teaching?

3. What do we know about the students?
   Probes:
   a. Ethnic diversity?
   b. Socio-economic backgrounds?
   c. Developmental level of understanding?
   d. How do you think the students viewed this lesson?

4. Why did the lesson initially fail?
   Probes:
   a. Developmental level of the students?
   b. Lack of preparation activities that would enable them to experience success and a sense of importance?

5. What alternate strategies could the teacher have tried to teach this concept?
   Probes:
   a. What are the risks and consequences for each strategy?

   b. What evidence can you give that each suggested strategy is more developmentally suitable?

6. Do you agree that "improving self worth" is an appropriate concept to teach young children? Why or why not?
   Probe:
   a. Should we assume that these children have a low self esteem (see commentary by Amado Padilla in "A Trip to Hell")?

7. How would you/have you handled similar lessons?
   Probes:
   a. Were your lessons successful? Why?
   b. What are the risks and consequences of your strategies?
   c. What strategies have you seen or read about that you think are noteworthy to explore?

8. What principles can we generate from this case discussion?

Teaching Note

A PAINFUL REFLECTION and SOME LESSONS LEARNED

Introduction

"A Painful Reflection" and "Some Lessons Learned" are written by the same teacher and provide an opportunity to explore one teacher's attempt to teach a non-English speaker with a similar situation a number of years later. The commentaries treat these two cases as a pair. Our teaching note also analyzes and compares these cases together.

In the first case, "A Painful Reflection," the narrative is told from the retrospective view of a teacher who recalls her painful failure with a non-English speaking student during her first year of teaching. Magnus, a 6th grader from Norway, arrived in her classroom mid-year. Given no district support and no training for what to do in this situation, she tries to help him but has little success. Knowing something was wrong, she turns to the parents with her concerns but is met by their satisfaction and lack of concern. They considered Magnus's shyness a justifiable reason for his language and social underdevelopment. With the advantage of hindsight, the teacher attributes such factors as traditional seating and lack of cooperative models to be responsible for Magnus's isolation and hindered capacity to learn English. But at the end of the case, she is left with unanswered questions and a sense of overwhelming failure.

The second case, "Some Lessons Learned," written 25 years later, stands in dramatic contrast to the first one because of the district's apparent support and teacher's expertise in coping with non-English speaking students. This time she describes a student she currently has–a third grade Korean student whose family has recently immigrated to this country. We immediately notice several things that are different. First, the parents insist that the teacher use the student's new American name, Sandy, and not her given Korean name. We also notice the presence of an interpreter and routinized tasks that are designed to help non-English speakers, like student grouping and student assistance. Moreover, it appears that the teacher was prepared with specific strategies to help Sandy learn English. The memory of "isolation" in the earlier case is no longer a part of a non-English speaker's experience.

Context

The first case takes place at a time when little was known about how to integrate non-English speakers into schools and classrooms. This teacher was learning how to work with these youngsters at about the same time as many of the ESL and bilingual scholars began writing about it.

Magnus's situation presents a particular set of aspirations, expectations and attitudes. He only came to this country for a short time and apparently had little motivation to integrate into American society. For most students his age, leaving behind friends and encountering a new situation would be distressing. Consequently his low affect, isolation, and lack of interaction could be as much a result of these factors as the traditional setting of the classroom. Even the comparison to the younger sibling is problematic. Magnus's younger brother is at an age when strong socialization and natural language acquisition is much easier.

The immigrant context in the second case provides a very different set of motivations and supports. Unlike the Norwegians, Sandy's family are here as permanent residents and not for only a six-month visit. Thus her parents were more eager to make a new life in the U.S., a critical factor in their motivation in acquiring new customs and a new language. Moreover, their cultural bridge between home and school was greatly strengthened by the presence of their own extended Korean-American community. The commentary by Lois Meyer sheds light on these issues and should be a provocative element in the discussion.

Segments of the Discussion

What Do We Know About the Teacher?

In the first case, what is most telling is the profound sense of isolation the teacher experienced as a novice. In retrospect, she realizes that her classroom modeled the very lack of cooperative support that the student experienced as a newcomer. She readily acknowledges the lack of ESL support services and describes with frustration her attempts to help Magnus with English. At the same time, however, she is able to accept his success in mathematics as evidence of some school achievement. Like many beginning teachers, she chooses not to voice her concerns even when she notes how well Magnus's kindergarten brother learned English. Rather, she harbors her feelings of inadequacy in silence. With hindsight, the teacher concludes that student involvement and an interactive environment are necessary to natural oral language development.

The picture in the second case is different. Here the teacher speaks knowledgeably of the natural approach to second language acquisition. This approach takes into account the stages of reception and production that develop from listening and interacting in a situationally rich context rather than through the traditional methods of oral drill and practice. Her awareness of spontaneous production indicates that the student is not being forced into premature speaking by unrealistic demands. This respect for the students' own development is also a key to understanding the situation. The relationship between literacy in her native language and oral language development is taken into consideration because it assures the teacher that basic skills can be more easily transferred across languages.

The years of teaching in support of ESL have given this teacher a broad knowledge of key concepts such as comprehensible input. She recognizes that instructional and socially supportive approaches will help the new student understand the activities and experiences in the classroom.

What Do We Know About the Students?

Magnus is a white, Norwegian sixth grader who arrives mid-year. His father is in a business that allows him to relocate his entire family for six months and then return to his native country. Both parents speak English. Magnus spends most of his time as an isolate, making no friends in school and learning only limited English. Nonetheless, his mother feel that he is happy and comfortable in school, and attributes his isolation to shyness.

The second case involves an immigrant Korean girl whose non-English parents seek to both build a life in the new country and make ties with the local Korean-American community. These differences in status and motivation to learn may affect Sandy's desire and capacity to learn English. Moreover, unlike Magnus, she is still in an early age of natural oral development and has not yet contended with the social peer pressure of beginning adolescence. Thus Sandy is more flexible, receptive, and language-ready than Magnus. Meyer's commentary examines all of these issues and is a very helpful resource.

Sandy is characteristic of the Asian newcomer student in situation and need. As a Korean student, she represents the Asian immigrant who comes from a land of origin to become part of both U.S. society and her own historic Asian-American community. These students represent a bicultural experience as well as a second language challenge. Pairing her with a Korean-American student supports her entry into a bicultural world at an age that will have much greater impact for her than for her parents.

ESL Instruction

Facilitators may want to use this case discussion(s) as opportunities to begin to examine effective ways to integrate non-English speakers into classrooms. What are some of the things to consider? What techniques did this teacher use during her first year? What was effective? What other things could she have considered? Then compare the first case to the second. What was different?

What's striking about the first case is how little the teacher knew about bilingual education, so she was forced to use a trial-and-error approach to teach Magnus English. She neither had any of the visual or auditory materials that are used today nor knew about sheltered English techniques such as body and facial expressions, hand gestures, voice queuing, repetition, and the use of objects that are common in today's bilingual classrooms. She also did not know about the natural approach to language acquisition, which would have helped her appreciate that language production must come at its own speed. For a 6th grade boy in a new social setting who is the only non-English speaker, it makes sense that he may be hesitant to speak for fear of error and embarrassment. Age, gender, and context are all factors in acquiring a second language.

In reflecting about the case, the teacher acknowledges some of the issues that have affected her current methods of ESL instruction. Her understanding of the natural development of oral language assists her in realizing the importance of student interaction, group activities, and supportive materials.

In the second case, we see a much different situation and set of circumstances. There are now formal ESL classes, one hour per week, that are supplemented by volunteers for individualized instruction. The teacher's increased knowledge is apparent in her consideration of the student's native language literacy and its relationship to her oral language development. The description of Total Physical Response Methods, an established ESL technique, also reflects the teacher's expertise. Her observation about spontaneous production in natural language development reflects her own acquired knowledge. She now uses a variety of curriculum materials, auditory aids, language activities and socialization opportunities to help the students.

The ultimate recognition of the relationship of socialization to second language acquisition is the teacher's greatest asset. In the second case, we see an increase in the teacher's understanding of ESL strategies through her description of the natural approach to language acquisition and physical response activities, but it is important to explore why these techniques are useful. The fact that Sandy didn't make a spontaneous oral production until the end of the school year indicates the need for supportive, receptive expressiveness with little pressure to produce–the natural approach. The teacher created a social setting that encouraged Sandy to speak. Her own oral development added to her opportunities to see the vocabulary being acted out, and resulted in her own spontaneous production. This understanding on her teacher's part grew not simply from her knowledge of ESL, but was anchored in an understanding of developmental and social needs. Yet Meyer's commentary raises important questions that the teacher either ignores or is not aware of (please refer to her commentary). What are they? How should they influence a teacher's plan for helping non-English speakers?

Closure

Facilitators should provide time for members to synthesize what they learned, and generate any principles for teaching non-English speakers. The may also want to create a list of unresolved questions that need more attention.

Suggested Discussion Outline

1. What are the facts in each case?
   Probes:
   a. What actually happened?
   b. How did the teacher feel in each case?
   c. What supports were noted in the second case that were not present in the first?

2. How would you compare the family situations of each student?
   Probes:
   a. Six-month stay versus immigration?
   b. Parental expectations? Why?
   c. Motivation to integrate into American society?

3. How can you compare Magnus, Magnus's brother, and Sandy's developmental levels?
   Probes:
   a. What is the developmental level of each of them?
   b. How do these differences affect their learning and socialization needs?

4. How would you contrast the teacher's situation between the two cases?
   Probes:
   a. New teacher versus veteran?
   a. District support?
   c. Perceptions of the students?
   d. Expertise and comfort with ESL strategies?

5. Let's look at the teacher's reflections in the first case. What did she think were the causes of her problems? Support your answer.
   Probes:
   a. Were her hypotheses correct?
   b. Are there any hypotheses she may have overlooked?
   c. What disagreements, if any, do you have with her conclusions?

6. Now let's look at her reflections in the second case. To what does she attribute her success?

Probes:
a. Were her hypotheses correct?
b. Are there any questions she ignored or neglected to consider?
c. What disagreements, if any, do you have with her conclusions?

7. What does Meyer's commentary have to add to this discussion?
Probes:
a. What questions does she raise?
b. How does she compare the students in "A Painful Reflection" and "Some Lessons Learned"?
c. How do her questions help you plan for/teach non-English speakers?

8. Describe some key issues in English-as-a-Second-Language acquisition.
Probes:
a. What is the natural approach?
b. How would student grouping affect language acquisition?
c. What classroom routines, activities, and structures are important?

9. Do you have any students in your classes that are non-English speakers? If yes, what do you do?
Probes:
a. What were your successes with these students?
b. What were your disappointments?
c How much support did you get from the district?
d. What resources could you use to get more assistance?

10. What principles can you generate about dealing with non-English speaking students?
Probes:
a. What questions would you consider?
b. What teaching methods would you use?

Teaching Note

PLEASE, NOT ANOTHER ESL STUDENT

Introduction

This case begins with an overloaded, middle school bilingual teacher who has absorbed over 20 Non-English Proficient (NEP) students since mid-year. This teacher reacts with frustration at the tremendous responsibilities and demands placed upon her by the escalating cultural and linguistic diversity. The overcrowded, undersupplied classroom is fairly bursting at the seams with youngsters unfamiliar with the North American educational setting. She is bothered by the hasty entrance and difficult adjustment of students.

Finally in desperation, she creates a unique solution, together with a creative writing teacher, that involves bringing together fluent English-speaking students with non-English speaking newcomers. The two teachers design a partners model that takes into account gender and culture. In addition, they design an information packet for the pairs that includes basic knowledge like numbers, the alphabet, maps, addresses, dialogues, and even cross-cultural games. The goals for their partnership program include nurturing friendships for the bilingual students, creating a sense of belonging in their new country, and providing culturally relevant material in English/Spanish.

The case traces the development of the student partnerships from apprehension and shyness to real interaction and learning. Most significant are the students' assessments of the project, which reflect their deep sense of responsibility and achievement. The teachers, on the other hand, are able to identify areas that need improvement, such as materials development, grouping, flexibility, and native language instruction.

Context

This particular case presents a demographic microcosm of the cultural and linguistic challenges facing public schools. Typical of overcrowded bilingual classrooms, the student population increases as the school year progresses. In this case, for Latin American students whose own calendar year begins in April, there is great academic loss when entering U.S. schools operating on the September-June cycle. Not only do these Latino students lose learning time, they also enter classes where relationships have already been formed and they are the outsiders.

The overcrowded conditions described in the story reflects the understaffing and limited resources so much a part of the bilingual setting. Schools that are overwhelmed with escalating numbers must rely on the capacity of already strained classes to continue to receive students with no increase in materials or assistance. This case in particular presents the innovative practices many ESL teachers must engage in to meet the challenge. Second language needs are matched by the need for quick U.S. cultural information for immigrant students who enter regular schools without special newcomer programs to prepare them. The students hunger for available information on American habits, customs, and behaviors.

The model used in this case relies on the buddy or partner system, which provides the newcomer with the support and assurance of a knowledgeable linguistic and cultural helper. This reassuring partner both inspires more spontaneous language production than a teacher, and helps to reduce the newcomers' anxiety of expressing themselves. At issue in this case is how a teacher creates these structures with little or no institutional support and an escalating immigrant population.

Segments of the Discussion

What Do We Know About the Teacher?

The teacher is an experienced ESL teacher who feels the burden of responding to an overflow of students. Her reflections on previous teaching experiences in Latin America lets us know that she is culturally knowledgeable about the world of the new immigrants she receives. It is apparent from the narrative that she feels singled out to handle the difficult load of so many newcomers. Is there any indication she resents this? Could the school administration handle student placement differently?

What Do We Know About the Students?

We know that these students, in general, have recently immigrated from Latin America. We can guess that if they come from Central America, particularly El Salvador, their circumstances are not ideal. Civil war has produced an inconsistent educational situation as well as a violent and traumatic setting that has greatly affected the youths who immigrate to the U.S. The wrenching separations, flashback memories, and sense of guilt for leaving are all psychological issues these newcomer youngsters must deal with. Consequently, the buddying and partnering project for writing and second language development answers a number of other needs. The U.S. cultural information materials and targeted pairing provides a built-in friendship as well as a sense of cultural assurance for shy and nervous newcomers. The pairing also allows youngsters to express the stories of their homeland in a less embarrassing way and might allow them to release some emotional issues in a more private setting with their buddy.

Second Language Issues

The teacher is quite candid in examining the deficits in her creative model. She sees that second language acquisition must not exclude the need to continue native language instruction as a bridge so that the academic momentum is not lost in the transition to a new culture and language. The use of native language could also have assisted in preparing youngsters for the academic tasks. We might examine other tactics for helping NEP students (see Kawazoe's commentary). Are there youngsters for whom this partnership model would not be successful?

Closure

In this case, the teacher has been rather thorough in the exploration of her project and its flaws. During this case discussion, it might be helpful to compare this model to other ESL strategies that participants are aware of. This case might also be compared to "A Painful Reflection" and "Some Lessons Learned" (in the accompanying volume). Contrast the settings, grade level, student needs and second language needs among the three cases. How do the students' desires and needs differ as a result of their backgrounds? How are the teacher's strategies and methods different? Do the commentaries reflect these differences and similarities across cases?

Suggested Discussion Outline

1. What characterizes this classroom setting?
   Probes:
   a. What are the goals?
   b. What do the students expect?
   c. What are the instructional approaches?

2. What do we know about this teacher?
   Probes:
   a. What were some of the attitudes held by the teacher regarding her job?
   b. What did she learn by the end of the project?

3. What were some of her strategies?
   Probes:
   a. How did the buddying help the students?
   b. What could have been done differently in the project?
   c. What about native language instruction?

4. Examine the Students' Writing Process in Kawazoe's commentary.
   Probes:
   a. What was the importance of the partner?

   b. How was this process similar to or different from the partner model described in the case?

5. What did the project accomplish?
   Probes:
   a. Did it meet the teacher's hopes?
   b. What could have been improved?
   c. What student needs were not met?

6. Compare the ESL strategies presented in previous cases ("A Painful Reflection," "Some Lessons Learned") to this case.
   Probes:
   a. What were the similarities and differences?
   b. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each approach?

7. Can you generate any principles of instruction for integrating non-English speakers into a classroom?

Teaching Note

FIGHTING FOR LIFE IN THIRD PERIOD

Introduction

This case is possibly the most emotionally provocative narrative in the casebook. On the surface, it focuses on a white, middle-class "re-entry" teacher's difficulty with four disruptive black high school students and her search for constructive strategies to establish control in her classroom. Underneath, it deals with bias and naive expectations of the harsh realities of inner-city youth. The teacher's honesty and self-examination of her thoughts and feelings as she struggles to find solutions to her problems, coupled with the substantive commentaries from a black scholar, a veteran white teacher, and two new teachers of color, might kindle some passionate reactions to some of the issues raised in the case.

This case also provides an opportunity to question personal bias. As the teacher-author confronts her own prejudice and struggles to work through it, some participants may strongly identify with the teacher's dilemmas and reflect on their own. Others may be angry with the teacher's initial naivete and bias towards blacks and may express their feelings with intensity. Thus, if this case is used in a seminar, it may be wise to delay discussing it until after the group has had an opportunity to establish trust with one another.

An interesting and provocative side-track for this discussion is a comparison of this case to "Moments of Truth and Teaching *Pygmalion*." That teacher-author–also a middle-class white veteran–describes similar insecurities and tensions while teaching *Pygmalion* to poor black high school students.

Though we usually don't recommend one particular approach for utilizing commentaries, we suggest that this case discussion may be better served with a two-stage analysis. First, discuss the case without the commentaries so as to clearly identify personal responses to the narrative. Then read the commentaries and discuss how the reactions may have modified critical judgments and analysis.

Context

This case takes place in an experimental magnet school, located in a semi-rural setting near a large metropolitan area. The school is dominated by students from

African-American and Hispanic working class backgrounds, and had been stigmatized with a reputation for campus disorder and low student achievement. One of the strategies to deal with the situation was to reduce teacher/student contact hours so teachers could develop personal relationships with their students.

The author portrays herself as an inexperienced, idealistic teacher who looked forward to broadening her "white middle class life" by helping minority students prepare for a "successful and responsible American life." However, she was the first to admit that she was unprepared to deal with some of the adolescents she encountered in her third period class.

"The Gang of Four" were the teacher's most difficult students. They were all African-American students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Veronica, a new mother, had to support her baby while attending school; Lee and Travis had no fathers and apparently adhered to little control at home; and Larry was strongly influenced by members of his church. Because of their situations, these students had to make life decisions that may be more parallel to those of adults than to typical middle and upper class adolescents. However, unlike many students in similar situations who drop out of high school–particularly black males–these four were "hanging in" and trying to stay in school.

Segments of the Discussion

Like most of the cases in this book, this one may be explored in different ways depending on the instructor's purpose. Our approach is to divide the analysis into three parts: 1) an analysis of the problems, 2) an analysis of the roots of racial and socio-economic stereotypes, and 3) an analysis of the teacher's intervention.

At the beginning of the discussion, ask what this case is about. Responses to this simple question will enable you to gauge where individuals stand on their assessment of important issues. Some personas may say that this is a case of classroom control and analyze the issues from that vantage point. Others may focus on the emotional elements of the case and examine issues of bias, racism, and middle class naivete.

A cautionary note! Participants may focus on whether this teacher is a racist, and attempt to prove it by pointing to different parts of the narrative. This discussion has merit for a brief period of time, but it is not an end in itself. At issue is the source and forms of racism, not the particular behaviors of this teacher or these students. Understanding the multiple interpretations of many aspects in this narrative (see commentaries, particularly Ramirez and Marchbanks), allows us to explore not only how the teacher could have handled her situation differently, but also how racist tendencies impact our own lives.

First Day Confrontation

At first reading, the disruptions by the "Gang of Four" may appear to be simply a classroom management problem. The students, especially Veronica and her three friends, appear rude and undisciplined, and the teacher lacked the skills to take control. Upon closely analyzing what the teacher and students said, however, and viewing the situation from the perspective of the students, the episode makes more sense. The teacher's idealistic speech can be construed as preachy and may have provoked students who were struggling to stay in school against terrible odds. All three commentators respond to this episode and provide perceptive insights into why the students may have reacted as they did. In retrospect, the teacher also appears to understand her initial mistakes (see first part of her Reflections at the end of the case).

Baggage of Stereotypes

Sex-race stereotypes. In writing this case, this teacher-author took the opportunity to confront her preconceptions of the ghetto, particularly of African-American students. She wrote candid statements such as: "These students would have been a fearsome group in any color, but their blackness seemed at first to be a barrier," and then analyzed how this affected her teaching. She also used descriptive language that reveals the depths of her feelings. For example, in depicting Veronica she wrote: "Stout, black, stuffed into a flame red dress, Veronica sauntered slowly, insolently past me. . . ."

It is possible that this kind of imagery carries with it the teacher's unconscious fears of confronting blacks and consequently accounts for her inability to deal effectively with Veronica. In other words, the complex mix of race and sex perceptions may have influenced the teacher's understanding of the real problem of an outspoken young woman in her classroom. The degree of fear and anxiety in her reaction to Veronica is indicative of these issues.

The prevalence of sex-race caricatures or stereotyping is significant in understanding this teacher's reaction to her confrontation with Veronica. This "Jezebel" or "Sapphire" stereotype of African-American women is often a portrayal of highly-charged sexual aggression and "incorrectly equates her black skin and tight red dress to insolence" (see Ramirez's and Marchbanks's commentary). Sex-race stereotypes may also be attributed to other ethnic groups. For example, while the "Fiery Señorita" images attributed to Latina women are similar, the Asian "Geisha" stereotype is sexually pleasing, passive, and accommodating.

Socio-economic issues. A third stereotype which permeates this case relates to the teacher's perceptions of poverty–"the real enemy." As she explains in the case, she tries to help students overcome the "poverty mentality" which consists of "apathy, laziness, and hopelessness." Thus, rather than judging the "Gang of Four" by their determination to get an education, the teacher draws on her preconceptions of the attributes of poverty.

She allows herself to step back from her racial perceptions by claiming that poverty creates the apathy, laziness, and vulgarity manifested by her students. (See Ramirez's and Marchbanks's comments on the dangers of misinterpreting socio-economic issues.)

In essence, the teacher may simply be substituting one stereotype for another. She could have chosen to see the students' efforts in school as strong signs of survival, endurance, and hope in such difficult circumstances. She could have recognized their attendance at school as a sign of their commitment and have respected them for it. In short, she could have acknowledged their real life poverty and risk without simultaneously inferring negative inherent characteristics.

Perceptions of non-English speakers. Ramirez takes issue with the stereotype that non-English speaking Latino parents hinder their children's success in school because of their language deficit. Rather, Mexican-American families are often strong social units who support their children to excel. It is up to the schools to inform these families how to help their children (see commentary).

Color blindness. Ladson-Billings commends the teacher-author for dealing honestly and openly about her feelings towards blacks, because such topics are generally taboo. "Oh I don't see color. I just see children," is commonly the standard response toward racial and ethnic differences among teachers. Yet it appears that this author may have become "color-blind" as she grew more comfortable with her black students. In the reflections section of the case, the teacher writes: ". . .I hardly notice that [people of color] are 'different,' because in fact they actually don't look different to me."

This topic of color blindness is complex and emotionally provocative. For the author, a person's blackness was initially alien and was accompanied by a host of stereotypes. As she shed her feelings of racism, she shed her negative feelings toward color until she hardly noticed any differences. To her, this represented personal and professional growth. Yet, to persons of color like Marchbanks and Ramirez, the denial of differences is insulting.

Search for Understanding and Control

The teacher tried many strategies to gain control of her situation, but the Gang of Four, especially Veronica, continued to challenge her authority. She sought help from outside resources, who were very supportive. She tried to develop a personal relationship with her students, which, as Ladson-Billings and Nelson-Barber maintain, is one of the most important tactics with minority students. Her attempts led to new understandings and empathy for her students' circumstances, but not significantly increased control or enjoyment of the third period class. In fact, she dreaded it.

During this section of the discussion, the facilitator might want to explore why the teacher had such disdain for this class and for these particular students. Why did the teacher feel powerless to intervene appropriately? What was it about Veronica that was especially difficult? Was gender an issue? Veronica was a mother, with all of the adult responsibilities involved in that role. Perhaps this teacher had difficulty relating to an adult woman in her classroom. Participants should examine why Veronica decided to speak individually to the teacher? What was she trying to communicate (see Desser's commentary)?

The Intervention

As the teacher reported, one day she realized that she was the only person who could solve her problem. "I needed to be not just a teacher, but a true leader in solving a group problem." Her strategy entailed not only telling the students her honest feelings but also, and perhaps most important, listening to their suggestions. Apparently, her intervention worked; the students reported that they wanted her to take charge. The success of this strategy demonstrates the importance of reciprocity between teachers and students in developing consensus with one another.

One way to facilitate this part of the discussion is to ask the group to evaluate the teacher's intervention by giving her a letter grade (A-F). While explaining why they conferred a particular grade, participants should take into consideration the teacher's speech, the small group activities, the students' responses, and the indicators of success. Participants should also consider what other interventions the teacher might have used.

Several selections from *The Intern Teacher Casebook* (Shulman & Colbert, 1988) can be used as comparative cases for this discussion. All of the cases in this volume are written by beginning teachers in a large metropolitan district who experience many of the same problems as this author describes. Some teachers used similar interventions but had different results (see in particular, "Painful Growth").

Closure

This discussion probably stimulated more questions than it resolved. Thus, before the end of the session, facilitators should debrief what occurred and synthesize new insights. Many groups may want to revisit these issues in ensuing seminars.

Suggested Discussion Outline

1. What is this case about?

2. [Go to the confrontation during the first class.] Why did the class get out of hand?
   Probes:
   a. What prompted the students' initial restlessness?

  - b. [Looking at the text description of the teacher's opening speech], why do you think Veronica called the teacher a "fake preacher lady"?
  - c. After the three black boys began dancing around the room, what message did the teacher communicate by proceeding to go about her business?
  - d. What alternate opening speeches and first-day agendas might the teacher have considered?
  - e. What are the risks and consequences for each approach?

3. What do we know about this teacher that would help explain some of her reactions?
   Probes:
   - a. What do we know about her background?
   - b. Why did she want to teach at this school?
   - c. What was her mission for her students?
   - d. What cues in the narrative help us understand her preconceptions about African-American students and their family circumstances (perceptions toward race, socio-economic causes, color)?

4. What might provoke the "Gang of Four" to respond in the manner described?
   Probes:
   - a. What do we know about their background?
   - b. What do they gain from continually challenging the teacher's control?
   - c. How do they perceive this teacher? Why?
   - d. How do the other students feel about the Gang of Four?

5. How can we make sense out of the troubled relationship between Veronica and the teacher?
   Probes:
   - a. Are there any gender issues involved?
   - b. What difference might it make that Veronica is a mother?
   - c. Why did Veronica write the teacher a note on the first day of class?
   - d. Why does Veronica act hostilely toward the teacher?
   - e. Why do you think the teacher is particularly uncomfortable with Veronica?

6. On reflecting back on this experience, the teacher is pleased that she no longer notices differences in people's color. What is implied in this statement?
   Probes:
   - a. From the teacher's perspective?
   - b. From the perspective of persons of color?

7. What might explain the source of racial and socio-economic stereotypes?
   Probes:
   - a. Middle class background?
   - b. Lack of experience with other racial groups and poverty?

   c. Disposition to refrain from talking about racism in public?

8. Now let's turn to the teacher's intervention. What turned the tide in this classroom?
   Probes:
   a. What are some of the positive approaches that the teacher tried (e.g., seeking outside resources)?
   b. What are the positive consequences of establishing personal relationships? Are there any risks involved?
   c. What are some of the organizational support systems for pursuing these goals?

9. How would you evaluate the teacher's candid speech and cooperative group activity? Support your answer.
   Probes:
   a. What might have happened if the teacher had not solicited student opinions?
   b. How did this intervention affect the teacher's and students' subsequent thoughts and feelings for this class?
   c. How did this change affect the teacher's capacity to provide meaningful instruction to this class?

10. What new insights did you gain from this case discussion?

Teaching Note

A DIFFICULT YEAR

Introduction

The characters and associated dilemmas in this poignant case are too familiar in inner-city settings; only the names and specific events associated with the story are changed. The main character is Eric, an African-American third grade boy who was taken from his mother's abusive home and sent to live with his caring grandmother. Because of a series of events which are related in the case, he travels alone across the city to school. After Christmas, his moderately disruptive behavior becomes dramatically worse; he acts hostile, sometimes violent, to the teacher and other students, refuses to do work, and often sabotages instruction. After several unsuccessful attempts by the teacher, principal, counselor, social worker and school site team to mediate his behavior, Eric is referred to a class for emotionally disturbed children at another school.

The story is told by a white veteran teacher who has taught at the school for 13 years, and believes she has a good appreciation and understanding of the local "way of life." She maintains that Eric was the source of her most difficult year in 30 years of teaching. What makes this teacher unusual is the extent to which she tried to find ways to help Eric, including many of the conventional pedagogical practices and extensive meetings with the grandmother and all of the available school resources. Yet no one attends to the teacher's questions of how to cope with Eric in her classroom.

Feelings of frustration, sadness, and guilt permeate this teacher's story: frustration and sadness for not breaking through to the child, frustration with the system that didn't provide more classroom assistance for those working with Eric, guilt thinking about what more could she have done for Eric, and unremitting guilt for not adequately addressing the needs of the 29 other children in her classroom.

The commentaries from three perspectives–a black scholar, a black staff developer, and a white teacher–raise several issues. The first two commentators affirm that this teacher appeared to genuinely care about the child because of her repeated attempts to get help, but raise questions about some of the methods she used. They also point out that the majority of special education students in many districts are black males and ask, "Is this the best place for our children?" The third commentator, who has observed the teacher-author, comments on the case from a different vantage point. She is angry and saddened that this outstanding teacher, who has exhausted all of the conventional strategies that would have helped most students, feels guilty about not doing enough.

Without more support, she questions whether it is realistic for successful teachers to believe that they can be responsible for making a difference in every student's life.

It may be useful to compare this teacher-author's approach to that of the teacher in the following case, "Darius: I Hope He Makes It!" Both cases deal with hurting black youngsters, but the teachers' tactics and strategies for working with these boys are quite different.

Context

The school is located in a predominantly African-American neighborhood, but also serves students who are bused in from other areas. It appears to have an active support system for needy children–counselors, social workers, and school site teams–yet is less able to offer constructive help to the teachers who work with hurting children.

Segments of the Discussion

The first part of the discussion should focus on the facts of the case and the participants' diagnosis of the problems. Then ask: How else could the problem be framed? From Eric's perspective? From the mother or grandmother's perspective? From the resource persons' perspective?

What Do We Know About Eric?

Eric is one of the growing number of children in inner cities who are separated from their parents because of substance abuse and incarceration, and sent to live with their grandparents or some other care giver. We know that Eric is a needy child. He wishes that he were in the fourth grade with his peers, but he does not know how to assert this desire to school authorities. We can surmise that Eric wants to be with his mother; yet, when she is able to visit him, Eric's behavior is less controlled in school. He demonstrates that he much prefers to stay in this teacher's class than to return home for half-days. When under stress, however, he does not (perhaps cannot) adapt to the expected norm of student behavior; he refuses to do work, harasses other children, disrupts instruction, and is occasionally violent with the teacher and other students. We know nothing specific about his mother nor about the kind of abuse that Eric encountered in her household. We do know, however, that Eric's grandmother appears to be a caring person and has spent a great deal of time with school personnel trying to be helpful.

Youngsters like Eric are generally viewed by teachers as "problems," because of their disruptive behavior in class and volatile behavior on the playground. And, indeed, these children often demand considerable increased attention by teachers, administrators, and other resource personnel. In the day-to-day life as teachers, however, we often forget how much some children must endure to come to school. Books like Samuel Freedman's *Small Victories* and Alex Katlowitz's *There Are No Children Here* are excellent reminders of the harsh surroundings that many children, particularly black youngsters who live in project housing, must tolerate in their day-to-day existence. After reading these books, persons with no first-hand knowledge of these problems may incorporate "admiration for staying in school" to their view of students who are seen as "classroom problems."

What Do We Know About the Teacher?

She is a white veteran teacher who has taught for 30 years, 13 years in the same school building. She says that she has developed a sound relationship with the community and feels that she understands and appreciates "their way of life." From her narrative, it appears that she is a dedicated teacher and works hard to provide a solid learning environment for all of her students. When that mission is compromised, however, like it was in this case, she feels frustrated and guilty. Zolli's commentary offers confirming evidence of her skills as a teacher. We learn that her classroom is "interactive, visually and academically stimulating, and personalized."

What's clear is the enormous challenge that Eric presented to the teacher. As she said at the beginning of the narrative, Eric was responsible for her most difficult year of teaching. What were some of her interventions for helping him? Were any successful? How did the district specialists respond to her classroom problems?

How to Help Kids Like Eric?

After clarifying what techniques the teacher actually tried with Eric, it is critical to examine what alternate approaches the teacher could have considered. Ladson-Billings' and Haysbert's commentaries are helpful in providing some insights and specific ideas. They emphasize the importance of establishing a personal relationship with a "hurting child" and shed light on the special needs of African-American students (especially males).

One of the many unsuccessful approaches the teacher used to help Eric was to develop contracts about finishing his school work. Perhaps equally important, however, was the need to help Eric develop some internal discipline over his violent behavior. One possibility is to create specific incremental agreements that could be linked to what he wanted most: being promoted to the fourth grade. What's important here is to begin with short intervals to ensure the possibility of success—beginning with daily evaluations—and working up to longer periods of time. Interventions like this may have life-long consequences that go beyond this particular classroom.

After discussing what alternative strategies the teacher could have used with Eric, ask participants to share their own experiences. How does/can a teacher establish a personal relationship with her students? Is race an issue? Are there some strategies that are particularly helpful with certain ethnic groups? What are the risks and consequences of each strategy? How would you describe the personal relationship between the teacher and Eric?

A cautionary note! Many teachers–especially novices–might argue that teachers' hands are tied unless they have the full support of their students' families. They blame the victim–in this case Eric–for his behavior in school and assume that nothing can be done because his personal problems are so acute. Some may suggest that teachers simply have to "cut their losses," and never question whether different strategies might have made a difference.

Facilitators should note that lengthy discussions on topics like these may be very active and cathartic, but they can easily diminish into mere complaining sessions where no real learning occurs. Our experience suggests that unless the facilitator redirects the discussion away from the "blame the teacher" or "blame the victim" topics toward more constructive, less conventional approaches that appear to work with African-American youngsters, time may run out before the latter topic is discussed.

Where to Get Help?

One of the biggest problems for teachers who have problems with individual students is figuring out how and where to get help. The teacher in this case sought guidance from outside experts, but the topic of conversation was always focused on what was best for Eric, not on specific alternative approaches for the teacher. Moreover, the social service team appeared reluctant to disclose confidential family information. Where can/should teachers look for help?

One possibility is from other teachers who have similar problems. School site case conferences can be established, during which individual teachers present specific dilemmas, brainstorm alternate solutions with colleagues, and ultimately learn from one another. Another possibility is to read and discuss relevant articles in groups. For example, there are several articles that deal specifically with the needs of African-American children like Eric (see bibliography in casebook).

Retention

In the epilogue to this case, the teacher-author seriously questions the school's retention policy. This may be an interesting topic to pursue in the case discussion.

What's Realistic?

Zolli questions the tendency for successful teachers to feel that they should be able to handle all situations despite the obstacles. As a result, they "trip over their own success" and can end up with immeasurable frustration and guilt over their failures. How much should teachers expect of themselves? Is it realistic to expect to make a difference in all students' lives? Is it acceptable to let some students go?

What's the Best Educational Setting for Children Like Eric?

The discussion should end with the more general questions that provoke continued deliberation outside of class. What is the best way to educate children with special needs? Do they belong in classes for the emotionally disturbed? Is special education the answer? What are the implications of the fact that, in many districts, the majority of children in special education are African-American males?

Suggested Discussion Outline

1. What are the facts/key elements in this case?

2. What is your analysis of the problems?
   Probes:
   a. What conclusions can you draw from the description?
   b. What evidence do you have to support your conclusions?

3. How else can the problem be framed?
   Probes:
   a. From Eric's perspective?
   b. From the mother/grandmother's perspective?
   c. From the principal's and resource personnel's perspective?
   d. From the other students' perspective?

4. What do we know about Eric?
   Probes:
   a. Family situation?
   b. Hypotheses for change in behavior after the Christmas holidays?
   c. How do we know that Eric wants to stay in this classroom?

5. What classroom techniques and external resources did the teacher use to mediate Eric's behavior?
   Probes:
   a. What were the pros and cons of her tactics?
   b. What were their effects on Eric? On the rest of the students?

6. What alternate strategies could she have considered?
   Probes:
   a. Are there any that may be more sensitive to the needs of "hurting children"–particularly black males? (refer to Ladson-Billings and Haysbert commentaries)
   b. What are the risks and consequences associated with each strategy?
   c. How are this teacher's tactics different from those of the teacher who wrote "Darius: I Hope He Makes It"?

7. Do you think race was a factor in this case?
   Probe:
   a. How might this case be different if Eric were white?

8. In the teacher's epilogue, she reevaluates both the district's decision to retain Eric and the principle of retention in general. What do you think about retaining students?
   Probes:
   a. Do you think Eric should have been retained?
   b. What are the advantages and disadvantages of retaining students?
   c. What are the risks and consequences?

9. When the specialists fail to provide constructive classroom assistance with children, how can teachers get help from one another?
   Probes:
   a. What about case conferences?
   b. What about discussion groups on relevant articles?

10. How realistic is the expectation of many successful teachers that, despite all obstacles, they should be able to handle any situation?
    Probes:
    a. Is it realistic to believe that a teacher can reach all students?
    b. Is it acceptable to let some students go?
    c. What are the implications of each decision?
    d. What do you think of the belief that teachers must "cut their losses"?

11. What is the best educational setting for youngsters like Eric?
    Probes:
    a. Is special education the answer?
    b. What are the implications of the fact that the majority of students in special education are black males?

Teaching Note

DARIUS: I HOPE HE MAKES IT!

Introduction

This case can be used as a companion or comparison case to the previous narrative, "A Difficult Year." The case describes a teacher's struggle to cope with and help a nine-year-old black male child who came to her classroom with a history of low achievement and violence. However, unlike Eric's teacher, who never seemed to make headway with Eric no matter what tactics she used, this teacher's approaches appeared to make a difference in Darius's classroom work and, marginally, in his behavior with other students. Unfortunately, the progress was dramatically reversed when the administrators suspended Darius for violent behavior on the playground. Though there were minor gains during the two months after the suspension, Darius never returned to his previous "good behavior."

The narrative represents one of the few cases in this casebook that deal with approaches that appear to be effective with troubled black male youngsters. What were some of these approaches? How do they differ from the tactics that Eric's teacher tried? Why did Darius appear to respond to this teacher more positively than his previous teachers? How did the teacher-author regard Darius? What did she have going for her? The commentary by Gloria Ladson-Billings, a black scholar who has studied why some teachers are more successful with black children than others, provides insight into many of these questions. Peg Foley Reynolds, a veteran inner-city white teacher, adds a different perspective.

Context

This case takes place in an inner-city school, targeted for special school funding because of its high proportion of low-achieving, at-risk students. Darius's past two years at school had been marred by restrictions to a half-day schedule because of his violent behavior with other students.[1] From the reported comments of his third and fourth grade teachers, he appeared to be tolerated at best; not much work had been demanded from the teachers. Because he was a "good reader," the fourth grade teacher had put

---

[1] A restricted half-day schedule was also used for Eric, in the previous case.

Darius in reading groups every morning "until he got bored." When disruptive, he went to the principal's office to wait for dismissal at lunch.

Like Eric, Darius is another black male youngster who comes from a family with a lot of trauma. Though the case provides little information about his family background or the origin of his problems, we discover that his mother was murdered a month after the case was written. We can only presume the details of violence at home, because of Darius's repeated violent behavior with other children at school.

Segments of the Discussion

The first part of the discussion should focus on what actually happened in the case and the participants' diagnosis of the problems. When did the teacher discover that she would get Darius in her classroom? What did the teacher do? What happened?

What Do We Know About the Teacher?

She is a veteran teacher from a racially mixed background–part white, part Native American, and raised in a Latino culture–who has an excellent reputation for her success with inner-city, at-risk children. Her skillful use of strategies such as conflict resolution and active listening help children cope verbally with their problems rather than abusively. She also directs the school's Conflict Managers Program (see footnote in case) which trains individual kids to use conflict resolution skills with their peers on the schoolyard.

What is clear from reading her narrative is that, unlike many teachers, she was able to look beyond "Darius, the classroom problem," to "Darius, the individual." She describes him as a troubled child who is "particularly bright and insightful." Though initially annoyed to discover that she would have yet another "problem" in her classroom the following year, the teacher began to plan immediately for Darius's entry into her classroom. She talked to former teachers, looked through his academic records, and devised schemes to counter some of the apparently low-level educational experiences he had endured in the third and fourth grades. Discussion participants may want to talk about how to plan for integrating their own "problem" students into their own classrooms.

Motivational Strategies

One of the most important goals of this case discussion is to examine the tactics that this teacher used to motivate Darius to cooperate in her classroom. Developing contracts, nurturing a personal relationship, and physical contact such as hugging and flipping are some of the techniques that she mentioned in the case.

Ladson-Billings' commentary provides wonderful insights into why Darius responded to her. She discusses the importance of cultivating a personal relationship with black, at-risk youngsters like Darius, and examines other aspects of effectively working with African-American youngsters. During the discussion, participants should share personal strategies that they have found to be effective and/or ineffective with at-risk children–especially troubled black male youngsters–and offer explanations why the approaches either worked or didn't work.

Raising Expectations

According to the research literature, one of the worst, but most popular, strategies to use with at-risk children is to lower one's expectations of what they can learn. When this happens, however, students often incorrectly believe that they are slow learners and begin to act like it. Researchers like Rhona Weinstein from the University of California, Berkeley, and Henry Levin from Stanford University, maintain that such strategies can be harmful to students. Rather, teachers should raise their expectations of what children-at-risk can accomplish, and then provide support to meet these expectations.

One teacher who epitomized this philosophy is Jaime Escalante, whose work with remedial math students who passed the Advanced Placement mathematics test is now famous. Escalante was also a masterful teacher. He provided excellent instruction, making sure to relate key concepts to his students' life experiences. He also encouraged them to work hard and persuaded them to believe that they could be successful.

The Suspension

Darius's progress abruptly halted after he was suspended by the administrators, and he returned to his hostile, argumentative behavior. Analysis should focus on how the teacher handled the situation, and why Darius was so hostile. Ladson-Billings' examination of Darius's actions should be very helpful in this analysis.

Facilitators should be cautioned that, if not careful, discussion about the suspension could deteriorate into a bull session about what happens when principals are uncooperative. Though deliberation on this topic is not irrelevant, and may be cathartic in some instances, the discussion should advance beyond mere complaints. Any analysis of this case should deal with the administrative perspective. For example, what are the ramifications of Darius's hostile behavior to other students? To whom are administrators accountable? To their teachers? To their students? To the parents? Are there any situations where it may be appropriate to override the wishes of faculty?

Closure

During the closure, facilitators should ensure that the group understands the importance of the teacher's personal relationship with Darius to his growth in her classroom. That special relationship, however, also contributed to his personal anger when he felt betrayed by the teacher.

Suggested Discussion Outline

1. What actually happened in this case?

2. What do we know about this teacher?
   Probes:
   a. Background and ethnicity?
   b. Reputation?

3. What approaches did she use to deal with conflict?
   Probes:
   a. Active listening?
   b. Conflict resolution?
   c. Other?

4. What were the variety of tactics that she used with Darius when he came into her classroom?
   Probes:
   a. Cultivate a personal relationship?
   b. Physical contact (e.g., hugs, flipping)?
   c. Contracts?
   d. Raise expectations?

5. What other approaches could this teacher have used?
   Probe:
   a. What are the risks and consequences of each approach?

6. Compare this teacher's tactics to those of Eric's teacher (in "A Difficult Year").
   Probes:
   a. How are they similar?
   b. How are they different?
   c. What can we learn from each approach?

7. What do we know about Darius?
   Probes:
   a. Family background?
   b. Experience with former teachers?
   c. Behavior with peers?
   d. How can we account for his behavior in class and on the playground?

8. Why did Darius appear to respond to this teacher more positively than his previous teachers?

Now let's turn to the suspension.

9. What were the consequences for Darius?
   Probes:
   a. Why was Darius hostile to his teacher? To other students?
   b. Based on his former experiences with teachers, why should he trust any teacher?
   c. Do you think that the suspension influenced the way that other students regarded Darius? Why?

10. How did the teacher handle the situation?
   Probes:
   a. Immediately after the suspension?
   b. During the episode in class two weeks later?
   c. What other approaches could she have used?
   d. What were the repercussions of the situation?
   e. What is the worst possible scenario? What is the best scenario?

11. Now look at this case from the administrators' perspective. How would they have framed the problems?
   Probes:
   a. To whom are administrators accountable (e.g., faculty, students, parents)?
   b. What are the repercussions of administrators failing to be responsible for each of the above groups?
   c. Are there any situations where it may be appropriate to override the wishes of faculty?

12. Describe some of the students in your class who cause problems. What approaches have you used that have been effective? Which ones have been ineffective?
   Probes:
   a. Have you received any support with these students? If yes, what kind?
   b. Given this case discussion, can you think of any tactics to use with these students that you had not previously considered?

13. Closure: Are there any principles that you can generate from this and other cases on teaching troubled youngsters, particularly black males?

Teaching Note

A TRIP TO HELL

Introduction

A Filipino/Chicano resource teacher, who considered himself an outstanding teacher and role model for Latino students, substituted for the regular Spanish teacher on sick leave for a number of weeks. He was shocked at the difficulty he had with a group of 12 fifth-grade Latino students, who were pulled out of their regular class one hour per day to get native language instruction. The students were hostile and disruptive, they tried to sabotage assigned tasks, and they refused to speak Spanish. The teacher was not surprised that students resisted talking in their native language; that was not uncommon. What was shocking was their intensity to resist.

On the surface, this case is about a teacher who has problems with classroom management. When we dig deeper, however, and examine the situation from a variety of perspectives–political, sociological, psychological and pedagogical–we can begin to understand the cause of the students' disruptive behavior.

Four commentators examine the case. Richard Piper, who has studied bilingual programs for several years, not only reacts to the case but also sets the stage for discussions on bilingual education. Amado Padilla reacts to the narrative from his perspective as an educational psychologist. And Lori Murakami and Anna Yamaguchi, bilingual teachers themselves, add a practical viewpoint to the discussion.

Context

The case is situated in the context of relations betwen two minority cultural communities, Chinese and Latino. At issue are inter-cultural understanding and conflict among minority groups, indicative of large urban areas where the integration efforts are no longer focused on white and minority students. Since the white population in large metropolitan cities is generally decreasing, the implications of these relatively recent problems are significant.

The story takes place in a school that simultaneously tries to comply with two political directives. The first is the state's bilingual mandate, which requires the district to provide native language instruction for all students who are designated as Limited English Proficient (LEP). The second is the district's Consent Decree, designed to achieve ethnic integration and equal educational opportunities for all students. At times, city schools have difficulty balancing the efforts to comply with the various political mandates with the efforts to achieve educational excellence for all students.

This school, located in a traditionally Asian neighborhood, historically has resisted integration. It now houses two separate bilingual programs: Chinese bilingual classes that draw from students in the neighborhood, and Spanish bilingual classes that draw from Latino students bused in from other parts of the city. According to state and district policy, bilingual classes must contain a small proportion of Fluent English Proficient speakers (FEPs), who can act as model English speakers for the rest of the class. Apparently, the native Spanish-speaking students described in this case were placed in the Chinese bilingual class because of their fluency in English.

It should be noted that the logistics in this case are quite atypical, even for this district. When the bilingual mandate was originally conceived, it was assumed that native English speakers would be used as role models for LEP students. However, in many urban schools there simply are not enough native English speakers to go around. Moreover, there are often not enough credentialed bilingual teachers to meet student demand. In this case, all of the bilingual and English Language Development classes[1] were filled, so these students were placed in a Chinese bilingual class that was taught primarily in English.

Segments of the Discussion

Since understanding the parameters of this case is predicated on understanding its political and sociological context, it may be useful to begin this session with a discussion about its political and sociological context–in particular, the purposes for and rationales of bilingual programs and integration policies. The two commentaries could be helpful in this analysis. Piper provides informative background on both bilingual education and the challenges of teaching LEP students. Padilla questions the intent of the Consent Decree, especially when students are "used" to achieve ethnic balance in a particular school.

Then discuss what actually happened in the narrative. What did the teacher plan for his pull-out group? How did the students respond? How did the teacher accommodate his students' unanticipated reactions?

What Do We Know About the Teacher?

The case writer is a Filipino/Chicano veteran teacher, who reports that he is deeply committed to bilingual education throughout the elementary years. He considers himself a role model for Chicano students, trained in conflict resolution to handle a multitude of problems and equipped to linguistically and personally validate their personal concerns. Though Padilla questions some of his tactics (see below), the teacher feels that he is well-liked by his students and knows how to present instruction suitable to their learning styles. Thus, he is genuinely shocked at the students' negative reactions.

---

[1] English Language Development classes (EDLs) are transition classes from bilingual to mainstream English classes.

Instructional Plans and Methods

Instructional strategies/pedagogical. Though the teacher states that he had planned to present an innovative cultural and literature-based Spanish program, he actually used games, dittos, and cutting and pasting exercises to teach Spanish in his first few classes. The teacher admits that these "unchallenging activities" comprised a "watered-down curriculum," but he felt the need to use activities that would keep the students busy. Later on he tries other conventional approaches–a basal reader and short stories written in Spanish–to which the students seemed to respond more favorably.

Instructional strategies/interactional. When the teacher saw the intensity of the students' negative reactions to his lessons, he hypothesizes their problems were due to low self esteem. Thus he looks for ways to raise their image of themselves by: 1) personally validating the students in culturally familiar ways with "sincere" physical contact (e.g., hugs) and terms of endearment; 2) having 20-minute individual counseling sessions (during the regular program); 3) sending validation letters to students on official stationery; and 4) calling them at home. What other hypotheses could account for such hostile behavior?

How appropriate were these methods? Participants should examine the appropriateness of all of the teacher's strategies. Given what is described in the case, however, it is difficult to determine how suitable his instructional methods were. We do not know, for example, what the goals and purposes were for this pull-out program. Since "maintenance" of native languages is not part of the district's goals for bilingual education, perhaps the school designated one hour of native language instruction as an enrichment activity. Yet even if this were the case, what were students supposed to learn in this program? If the teacher had communicated with the regular teacher to establish common purposes and continuity of instruction, perhaps he could have planned more appropriate instructional units. At the very least, he would have been more equipped to assess the students' reactions.

How appropriate were the teacher's activities for a group of fifth graders? The initial games and cut-and-paste activities appear to be more appropriate for primary students than fifth graders. Possibly these particular teaching events turned off the youngsters. Murakami and Yamaguchi suggest more creative projects, such as "plays, skits, music and dance integrated with literature, science, and math activities–all incorporating the Spanish language." What are some alternative activities?

It appears also that the teacher invested more of his energy in out-of-class endeavors to raise students' self esteem than in planning meaningful instruction. From the teacher's description, these activities had positive results. The students were more responsive in his class, and the regular classroom teacher commented that some of the students had turned in more work. How appropriate were the teacher's methods? What are the advantages and disadvantages of these personal investments? What are the risks and consequences of these activities?

Padilla questions the case writer's use of "terms of endearment" with his students. These are terms usually saved for communicating with family members, not with strangers. It is especially inappropriate for men to use such terms with older children. What are some other ways the teacher could have shown respect and affection for his students?

Sociological/Psychological/Political Influences

There are other factors that may explain the students' negative reactions to this pull-out bilingual program. Some educators, like Padilla, argue that students may feel like second-class citizens when they are bused to another neighborhood, especially when "this is done simply to achieve some sort of arbitrary court-mandated ethnic balance." This argument may be particularly salient for Latinos who are bused into a Chinese-American neighborhood.

Others, like Nelson-Barber and Mesa-Bains, maintain that there may be different cultural styles of interaction that might cause tension between students and teachers. The case writer also notes possible ethnic differences in interactional behaviors between Latinos and Chinese Americans. Latino students often thrive in environments that encourage lots of spontaneity and activity and with teachers who are nurturing. Chinese Americans, on the other hand, are generally rewarded for disciplined and reserved behavior. The Latino students in this case may have been uncomfortable in a classroom where the expectations for appropriate behavior were vastly different from their own culturally accepted norms. Conversely, the teacher may have perceived the Latino students' behavior as disrespectful and antagonistic, and may have displayed favoritism toward students who acted in more familiar ways.

What about the general resistance among students to speak in their native language? Piper notes that it is not uncommon for Spanish-speaking youngsters to resist speaking in their native language for several reasons. This phenomenon also applies to students in other ethnic groups. Youngsters generally do not want to appear different in the eyes of their peers and resist speaking in their native language.

Did the students in this case suffer from low self esteem? Though the case writer expended lots of energy building his students' self esteem through cultural affirmation, Padilla questions whether this generalization, which appears to be directed to all low-achieving minority students, was appropriate (see Padilla's commentary). Perhaps, more important, the students suffered from a sense of powerlessness and exclusion from the Chinese-dominated classroom.

Closure

One way to bring closure to this session is to discuss how realistic the teacher's aspirations were regarding what he wanted to accomplish during his five weeks with these students. Padilla addresses this problem at the end of his commentary. Another tactic is to encourage the participants to share their experiences with bilingual pull-out programs and integration policies. What are the advantages and disadvantages of these programs from their perspective? From their students' perspectives? What new insights did this case discussion stimulate? Are there any principles that can be generated from this case discussion and their combined experiences?

Suggested Discussion Outline

To set the stage for analyzing this case, it may be useful to begin this session with a discussion about the purposes and rationales for bilingual programs and integration policies. This background knowledge is essential for understanding some of the key elements described in the narrative. (See Padilla's and Piper's commentaries.)

1. What actually happened?

2. Why did "a trip to hell" happen? Why did the teacher experience so many problems with his pull-out Spanish program?

3. What do we know about the teacher?
   Probes:
   a. What was the teacher's background?
   b. How qualified was he to teach this class?
   c. What did he want to accomplish?

4. What do we know about the Latino students in this class?
   Probes:
   a. What were their backgrounds? New immigrants? Second generation? Do we know?
   b. Why do they go to a special Spanish class?
   c. How do you think that the students (both Latino and Chinese American) perceive the pull-out program?
   d. What do you think about the situation?

5. What do we know about the context of this case?
   Probes:
   a. Why were these Spanish bilingual fifth grade students placed in this Chinese bilingual class?
   b. Why were Latino students bused to this Asian school?
   c. How does the state's bilingual mandate affect this situation?
   d. What are some of the differences and similarities in values between the Chinese and Latino communities?

6. Let's look at the teacher's instructional plans for the class.
   Probes:
   a. What did the teacher hope to accomplish in his class?
   b. What specific strategies did he use?
   c. How did he accommodate his instruction when he saw how strongly the students resisted?

7. How appropriate were those strategies?
   Probes:
   a. What other strategies could the teacher have tried?
   b. What are the risks and consequences for each one?

8. Why do you think the students were so disruptive in the first class and during ensuing classes?
   Probes:
   a. Inappropriate instruction?
   b. Change of teacher?
   c. Reaction to possible pent-up emotions during regular class?
   d. Why did they refuse to speak Spanish?

9. Now let's look at the teacher's interventions to provide effective support and raise students' self esteem.
   Probes:
   a. What specific strategies did he use?
   b. What were the consequences of these tactics?
   c. How appropriate were these interventions?
   d. Can you think of other interventions for these kids?
   e. Do you think that these kids suffered from low esteem?
   f. How appropriate is the use of "terms of endearment" with students?

10. The teacher was pleased with some of the consequences of his interventions. What were some of these changes in behavior?
    Probes:
    a. How much can we attribute to the teacher's interventions?
    b. How much change is feasible to expect in such a short time?

11. What do you think about the advantages and disadvantages of bilingual pull-out programs?
    Probes:
    a. What effect do these programs have on the students in the program? On the other students? On the regular classroom teacher?
    b. How do/can these programs help students?
    c. How do/can they harm students?
    d. Can you think of ways to improve the programs?

12. Based on this discussion and your experience, what principles can we generate about the issues discussed in this case? How do they relate to those generated in previous discussions? Have you had to adapt any existing principles because of new knowledge and insights?

Teaching Note

FROM "OUTSIDER" TO ACTIVE LEARNER: STRUGGLES IN A NEWCOMER SCHOOL

Introduction

In an all-Latino newcomer school receiving mainly rural, newly arrived students, teachers struggle to provide a balance of academic skills, cultural support, and knowledge of U.S. schooling and society. The case of Mario is an insightful view of the immigrant experience in a special newcomer school. The teacher reflects on her second year of teaching when a troublesome third grader, Mario, enters her class.

We see her early concerns for his behavior reflected in her emphasis on expected behaviors, class goals, rules, and routines. As a Latina herself from an immigrant working class background, the teacher responds to issues of cultural adjustment for her students. While attempting to support Latino values of respect for authority, she helps students to move away from absolute obedience to a more interdependent autonomy.

Yet, somehow with Mario, his inability to be responsible about his academic work leaves this dedicated teacher frustrated and angry. An explosive encounter and its aftermath reveals to the teacher a difficult family setting for young Mario. Their emotional and personal exchange give Mario and his teacher a deeper relationship. The result of this new relationship is the visit of Mario's mother, and the alliance of school and home as Mario blossoms in a new confidence in his abilities. The case ends with the positive note of student academic growth and teacher rededication to learning beliefs.

Context

The newcomer school setting allows us to gain some understanding of the complexity of the immigrant situation, the heterogeneity of a shared culture, and the role of language in preparing youngsters for regular classrooms. This case lets us examine the difficulties of school and home connections even when individuals share the same language and culture. The immigrant situation is filled with trauma and change when families separate and reunite in unpredictable ways. The entrance into a new school setting and into a larger society with different language and social demands creates great pressure on students who often must negotiate for their adult family members. The stressors for immigrant families seeking employment and experiencing social and economic displacement can produce family tension and sometimes violence. Although in this case we don't know the circumstances of Mario's family problems, they are not unusual for people thrown into such extreme changes. Student apathy can also be a manifestation of traumatic losses in the immigration move as well as a response to confusing demands in a new school setting. The teacher in this case gives us rich information on her instructional and curricular strategies and on the role of native language instruction.

The teacher's ability to set clear predictable outcomes, goals, and expectations is especially important in a newcomer setting where the whole meaning of learner and teacher is new. The ability to create a safe sense of expected behaviors alleviates the apprehension and anxiety common to immigrant students in a new society. Pringle's commentary sheds light on the goals in newcomer schools in preparing students for the larger society.

Segments of the Discussion

The discussion of the newcomer setting, its characteristics and goals will help set the stage for looking at the relationship of Mario and his teacher. What do we know about the newcomer school? What are the goals of this transitional setting? What are the instructional and curricular characteristics of this kind of school? How is it different from a regular school setting?

What Do We Know About the Teacher?

This Chicana teacher was born into an immigrant family from Mexico whose early years were ones of struggle. Marked in her early adulthood by the civil rights movement for Chicanos–"El Movimiento"–we know that her beliefs have been formed out of deep commitments of self-determination. Consequently, her own bicultural experience inspires her to help the students adjust their more traditional obedience to authority to a more open and expressive view of their own autonomy. Having only taught two years at the time of the case being narrated, we know that she has found in Mario one of her first significant challenges. We also know that she regards native language instruction and a culturally supportive curriculum as essential to her task.

Early Strategies

The teacher's emphasis on clear rules and routines creates a predictable setting for immigrant youngsters who need assistance in making the adjustment in a new school setting. In Mario's case, however, the "get tough" stance and repetitive emphasis on rules and routines may have overwhelmed his emotional needs for personal contact. Her focus on classroom behaviors may have obscured the other aspects so key to newcomer schools–linkage to family and knowledge about home environment. Until her conflict with Mario, the teacher had learned little about his home life.

The Crisis and Intervention

In confronting Mario about his failure to produce homework and his inability to bring in his mother, the teacher encounters for the first time Mario's deeper emotional life. As a result of this crisis, the teacher is able to be touched and respond in kind with her own emotional empathy. In Latino cultures where personal connections are highly valued, this student-teacher catharsis serves as the beginning of a new relationship.

The teacher's display of real concern for Mario introduces an element often uncomfortable to mainstream teaching–a teacher's personal involvement with his or her students. In the newcomer setting where the teacher's role is to help the family bridge the differences between home culture and the new culture, such personal connection is a necessity. Nelson-Barber's commentary provides insight to the value many Latino groups place on mutual respect, loving care, and student determination–*respeto, cariño,* and *ganas.*

The Response

The way in which both Mario and his family respond to the teacher's new personal relationship indicates the level of importance to the situation. Her heartfelt response is part of a well-structured classroom setting and does not act as a substitute for good classroom management or instruction, but rather as an extension and balance toward wholistic learning.

The academic growth of the student and the participation of the parent reflect the importance of the whole student. Discussing the three major beliefs of this teacher, in light of her strategies and interventions, would further the overall understanding of the case.

Suggested Discussion Outline

1. What characterizes the newcomer school setting?
   Probes:
   a. What are the goals (see Pringle's commentary)?
   b. What are the curricular and instructional approaches?
   c. What about home-school contact?

2. What do we know about this teacher?
   Probes:

a. What insights from her self-description strike you?
b. What insights from the Nelson-Barber commentary are relevant?
c. What were some of the cultural issues between the student and teacher?
d. How do the concepts *respeto*, *cariño*, and *ganas* (from Torres-Guzman in the Nelson-Barber commentary) apply in this case?

3. What were her early strategies?
Probes:
a. What was her rationale for the rules and routines emphasis?
b. What were the pros and cons of the "get tough" approach with Mario?
c. What was the importance of her cultural curriculum approach?
d. What else could she have done to facilitate Mario's entrance into the class?

4. What were the key issues between teacher and student during the crisis?
Probes:
a. What precipitated the crisis?
b. How else could it have been handled?
c. What did the emotional response of the teacher mean to the student (see Nelson-Barber commentary)?
d. Why did the parent respond positively?
e. What were the risks for the teacher in her emotional display?

5. What changed for the student and teacher?
Probes:
a. Why was the teacher able to reach Mario? (Discuss Pringle's commentary on the "window.")
b. What aspects of cultural adaptation was the teacher assisting in this case?
c. What new perspectives did Mario's mother develop about the school?
d. How was Mario able to improve as a result of the teacher's intervention?
e. What were shared cultural experiences between the teacher and student?
f. What were the cultural differences between the student and teacher?

6. Discuss the meaning of the balance between academic hopes, preparing for success in U.S. culture, and supporting family values and home culture (refer to Pringle's commentary).
Probes:
a. Are students pulled by expectations? How?
b. How can the teacher and school help the student balance these worlds?

7. Closure: Are there any principles you can generate from this special setting that would be helpful for regular classrooms?

Teaching Note

AN UNANSWERED DILEMMA

Introduction

This case has many layers. Unlike most of the other cases in this book that are rooted in diverse settings, the problems raised here between teachers and parents on how to best educate their children could happen in any school where parents are actively involved. The case is particularly interesting in this era where site-based management and parent involvement are given increased importance. Discussions about what are the best curricula and teaching methods are bound to create tension.

On the surface, the case is about a Japanese-American teacher's shock at receiving a hand-delivered letter, signed by a group of her students' parents, requesting that their children be placed in a different teacher's classroom for the following year. Apparently, the parents disapproved of the way she taught mathematics and thought their children would not progress appropriately. They wanted their children to spend more time on rote memorization, drill and practice.

The teacher does not understand why the parents disapproved so strongly. Her students' math scores on the California Test of Basic Skills showed satisfactory progress. She and many other faculty members had worked hard to learn progressive strategies that made mathematics more meaningful than more traditional approaches. Moreover, the parents had numerous opportunities to communicate concern–at back-to-school night, in response to several written communications, and during their volunteer days in her classroom–but no one had ever voiced disapproval. Why wait until the end of the year to show concern? Why go to the extreme measure of simultaneously sending the letter to the principal, the district office, and the school board? In short, what had this teacher done wrong? And how should she handle future disagreements with parents?

This case deals with many issues: faculty versus parent control, mathematics teaching methods, hurt feelings, and cultural norms of criticism and "losing face." The five commentaries are particularly instructive because of the variety of perspectives that can inform an analysis: a) by a well-known historian of education who sets the context of parents' roles in schools; b) by another teacher in the school who gives an insider's perspective to the problems; c) by a mathematics educator who questions how new teaching methods are being applied in classrooms; d) by a Japanese-American staff developer who offers a cultural interpretation of what occurred; and e) by an administrator who provides a political perspective.

Context

The context is a Japanese bilingual, bicultural school that has the reputation of being one of the district's finest schools because of its dedicated staff and links to the community. The parent group actively raises funds, participates in classrooms, and has traditionally been an integral part of the decision-making process in all aspects of school life.

Though the school is dominated by Japanese Americans, half of them immigrants, many Caucasian parents also try to enroll their children because of the school's excellent reputation. As one of the commentators noted, the parents have a great stake in their children's education and form an external network of communication. But their norms of communication among one another and between themselves and the faculty may vary along cultural paths.

Segments of the Discussion

It may be appropriate to begin this session with some background about the dichotomies between current interests in major curricular reforms and increased parent involvement via site-based management. Discussions about what and how to teach—when both parents and teachers have strong opinions and major investments in these issues—are bound to create tensions. As stated above, the problems raised in this case could happen in any school where parents are actively involved.

To begin the case discussion, ask what are the facts of this case. Probe for understanding of the context, what actually happened, how the teacher felt, the apparent reasons for parent discontent, and the response of the faculty.

What Do We Know About the Teacher?

The teacher is a Japanese-American woman who has the reputation for being an outstanding, dedicated teacher. She had attended numerous workshops to improve her mathematics instruction and believed that the time was well spent. Her instruction had improved, her students appeared more motivated and challenged, and they had performed well on the California Test of Basic Skills. Thus, she was shocked and terribly hurt by the parents' letter:

> My pride and dignity had been wounded when my professionalism and integrity were questioned. Worse, I had been accused of doing a disservice to the children. I was haunted by thoughts that I had brought this on myself, and I was full of guilt.

A Cultural Influence

What's interesting is that the teacher in the case comes from the same ethnic group as the majority of students, but seems surprised at the lack of negative feedback about her teaching. Several commentators note that, as a group, Asian parents may have a difficult time communicating disapproval because of their norm of respect for classroom teachers and concern for "face." Moreover, "generalized parental fears about negatively affecting a teacher's attitude toward their child" (see Jimenez) probably added to their hesitation of confronting the teacher with their concerns. Thus, it is not surprising that the parents in this teacher's class never voiced their disapproval, even though they had many opportunities to do so.

Hiroshima wonders why the parents did not go individually to the principal about having their child removed, which would have saved embarrassment on the part of both the teacher and the parents. Choosing instead to deliver a letter, causing the teacher to "lose face," raises questions about who may have instigated this situation. The norm of communication among whites tends to be more direct than among Japanese Americans.

The Faculty's Response

What was the faculty response to the teacher's situation? The case briefly describes a set of procedures that the faculty developed as a result of the parents' actions. But Garfield's commentary, which takes the perspective of another faculty member who also felt "attacked" by the parents' actions, gives a more complete picture of the teachers' reactions.

The Parents' Response/Curriculum Questions

It is easy to be carried away in this case by the teachers' sense of betrayal and frustration with the parental intrusion on their mathematics instruction. According to the narrative and some commentaries, this teacher and others on her faculty spent a great deal of time going to workshops to learn how to incorporate techniques from the new mandated California State Mathematics Framework. As a result, they firmly believed that what they were taught represented the best possible form of mathematics instruction.

But Barnett raises some interesting questions (please refer to her commentary). While not criticizing this particular teacher, she asks whether the parents may have had a legitimate concern. The current national movement in mathematics education deemphasizes rote drill and practice and puts a stronger emphasis on thinking and understanding. But it is possible for teachers to go to workshops–with good intentions about learning new ideas–and return to their classrooms without comprehending how to apply the concepts in ways that promote thinking and understanding.

Similarly, isn't it possible that, while watching their children struggle to solve mathematical problems, parents may pick up on the fact that their children lack the understanding to solve the problems? Barnett suggests that we must be open to parents' concerns about their children's instruction, because they may have information about how their children learn that teachers may not be aware of.

Movement Toward Site-Based Management

This case is significant because of the current movement toward site-based management. Many districts are finding that faculty-community teams, which are organized to improve school governance and decision-making, are more difficult to actualize than first anticipated. As Jimenez says, "there may be an inherent tension between the parent's desire for the best schooling for their child and the school professional's attempt to create the most nurturing, challenging and coherent program for all students." Jimenez's analysis about problems created by school bureaucracy and differing cultural norms illuminates these issues.

Cuban also comments on some of the cultural barriers that might surround parent/teacher conflicts (please refer to his commentary). As he says in his analysis, "The usual ways that a teacher and school tell culturally diverse parents what their children are learning and how they learn it often fails to convey what is intended. . . Bureaucratic solutions arrived at by the school community could squelch rather than encourage parent input about what is appropriate for their children."

What are some ways to constructively resolve curriculum disagreements between teachers and parents? When there are differences, what's the bottom line? What should be the respective roles of parents and teachers in determining how to best teach their children?

Closure

The questions and issues raised in this case cannot be answered from one case discussion. These are ongoing problems that should only be addressed on a case-by-case basis. One way to close this discussion, however, is to synthesize the key issues and unanswered questions that arose from this discussion. Then ask the group if they could generate any principles that should be considered for resolving future faculty-teacher confrontations.

Suggested Discussion Outline

1. What were the facts of the case?
   Probes:
   a. What do we know about the ethnic mix of the school?

  b. Why was the teacher feeling good at the end of the year?
  c. What was the reason for the parents' discontent?
  d. How did the teacher frame the problems?
  e. What was the response of the rest of the faculty to this teacher's dilemma?

2. What do we know about the teacher in this case?
   Probes:
   a. Was she a good teacher? How do we know?
   b. What kind of educative activities does she engage in to improve her teaching?
   c. What is the relationship between this teacher and the rest of her faculty?
   d. What was her ethnic background?
   e. How does "loss of face" influence her response to the situation?

3. What do we know about most of the parents in this case?
   Probes:
   a. What is the dominant ethnic group?
   b. What can we generalize about Japanese norms of communication? What may we expect?
   c. From which ethnic group is the PTA President? What difference might this make?
   d. How does their active involvement in the school influence this case?

4. Why do you think the parents chose to communicate to the teacher by a signed letter?
   Probes:
   a. How do different norms of communication influence this case?
   b. What are some organizational and/or bureaucratic constraints?
   c. How do such constraints influence the development of a trusting relationship between parents and teachers?

5. How does the faculty response to this dilemma influence a climate of trust between faculty and parents? (refer to Cuban's and Jimenez's commentary)
   Probe:
   a. What does the "grievance procedures" communicate to parents?

6. Why do you think the parents disapproved of the curriculum?
   Probes:
   a. Is there a possibility that the parents had a legitimate concern? (refer to Barnett's commentary)
   b. What may the parents know about the way their children learn that teachers may not be aware of?

7. From the students' perspective, what are the difficulties of this situation?

8. What can teachers do to help their students mediate the opposing expectations of their parents and teachers?
   Probe:
   a. What do you do?

9. What are some alternate strategies that this teacher, principal and faculty could consider to increase the trust between parents and teachers?
   Probes:
   a. What can teachers do to develop better working relationships with parents?
   b. What could this teacher have done to prevent this situation?
   c. What are the risks and consequences of each strategy?

10. What are some general strategies that a school could develop that would both increase the trust between parents and teachers and reduce the barriers of communication?
    Probe:
    a. What are the risks and consequences for each strategy?

11. When there are differences between parents and teachers, what's the bottom line? What should be the respective roles of parents and teachers in determining how to best teach their children?
    Probes:
    a. What are the consequences for the students?
    b. What are the consequences for the ethos of the school?

12. In summary, what are the key issues and unanswered questions that arose from this case discussion?

13. Are there any principles that we can generate that should be considered for resolving future faculty-teacher confrontations?

Teaching Note

OPENING PANDORA'S BOX: THE MYSTERY BEHIND AN "IDEAL STUDENT"

Introduction

The story begins with an eager and helpful Chinese-American girl whose behavior gives way to an obsessive friendship with another Chinese-American girl. The teacher is baffled by the escalating disruption as the friendship ends. Through the course of attempting to help the young student, much is revealed about the family and their relationships. A series of explosive conflicts is followed by an attempt to draw the parents into a dialogue about the girl's problems. The teacher is alarmed by the deep emotional disturbances which lay below the surface, yet she fails to involve the parents—perhaps because of psychological or cultural issues between the family and the school. The family manages to smooth over the problems and distance themselves from the teacher. Sadly, the teacher senses that the student's return to her previous ideal behavior may only temporarily disguise more serious personal and family issues.

Context

The cultural underpinnings of this case can only be described in the most general way because the heterogeneity of Chinese and Chinese-American families does not always provide us predictable, clear-cut cultural information. But as the commentaries suggest, there are some characteristic elements: the unequal treatment of boys and girls related to patriarchal Chinese traditions; the protection of private family information from public scrutiny; and the central themes of discipline, restraint, and the valuing of obedience and authority.

We know little of the family's migration from China or of their familiarity with the American school system. We can wonder, then, about the degree of disruption in the family's migration and how that has affected their perceptions and sense of trust for school authorities. Their experiences with racial discrimination, English language difficulties, and family histories may complicate their involvement with school staff. It is important to explore the school's and teacher's assumptions about the way parents should be involved and how it contrasts with Chinese-American attitudes about parent participation. We do know that the family in this case has maintained close ties to their home in Hong Kong and that they are themselves limited English speakers. It is clear that they value their language and culture because Connie continues to attend Chinese school three days a week.

In many Chinese-American communities, school and community relationships are distant and the role of the teacher is quite idealized. We don't have a clear picture of this family's feelings about the teacher's interventions. Given that traditional cultures associate authority with age, it might be important to explore how the parents responded to the conference when Connie was brought in. The cultural context of this case also makes it difficult for us to sort out the psychological meaning of Connie's behavior. Even such simple things as the cultural attitude toward pets, toward friendships outside the family and neighborhood play a part in the family's situation.

The other students involved in the situation are also Chinese-American girls (immigrants), yet their behavior would indicate that Connie's responses may go beyond a cultural norm. Even Connie's mother reflects on whether her daughter's behavior is "normal." In other words, the psychopathological issues can often be obscured by cultural differences. We have few Chinese-American school psychologists and psychometrists to provide us the knowledge and tools for adequately assessing the deeper meaning of student acting-out behaviors. What is clear is that this teacher was ill-equipped to know what would have been a cultural norm in this setting and what would have constituted a more significant individual and family disturbance. Nelson-Barber's commentary provides insights into these issues.

Segments of the Discussion

The discussion should extend deeply into the parent/family issues rather than stay simply at the level of teacher intervention and student response. This is a case that relies very much on the role of the family and culture for its meaning.

What Do We Know About the Teacher?

This experienced teacher has just changed schools so we can consider that she may not have known the community and school that well. While she is white, she has a sense of comfort with her immigrant students. At several critical points in the story, the teacher experienced a red flag of alarm in her mind. She describes a gut-level reaction of deep concern even when her principal feels she has overreacted. Throughout the case, the teacher senses that things are hidden in the family and that there is a discrepancy between the family's response to Connie's situation and the deep concern she feels as a teacher. We know that the teacher continually regarded this situation as serious.

Facilitators may want to examine how the teacher could have learned more about the situation. How might she have learned more about the family? Why didn't she get expert help from a school psychologist or a culturally knowledgeable counselor? What were other possibilities for intervention besides the teacher's attempts with student and family? What would have been the risks and consequences of counseling referral?

What Do We Know About the Family?

The family appears traditionally Chinese with considerable bonds with their culture, as demonstrated by their frequent visits to Hong Kong and their emphasis on a Chinese school for Connie. We know they are working class because they have Connie in the school's low-income based day care. It is important to consider what the parents may have thought about the teacher's interventions. Clearly, they believed that discipline was important in handling Connie's acting out. Even her suicide threat had been met with a spanking and her outbursts at the parent conference with restraint and control. We wonder if their responses were culturally governed by values of authority and discipline. How was the teacher's demonstrative hug and understanding acceptance of Connie's emotional display received by the parents? Were there differences in the values surrounding Connie's behavior? Reading Nelson-Barber's commentary on authority and obedience brings insight to this cultural issue.

Parent-Teacher Encounter

The teacher's inability to reach the parents may have had something to do with the cultural misunderstandings between them. How was Connie's referral to the principal viewed by the parents? What was the significance of bringing Connie into the parent conference? Some of the possible differences of values about directness, openness, styles of communication and sharing of family information between the teacher and the parents were in play in this case. In particular, the differences in the teacher's interpersonal style and the parents' restraint create a competing set of messages for Connie. Nelson-Barber's commentary targets this important issue of communicating across differences.

What Do We Know About the Student?

We know that Connie spends a great deal of time away from her parents and is in an institutional setting much of the time. The revelation of her earlier suicide threat indicates that she has been trying to get her parents' attention for some time. Both the excessive need for a friend and her obsessive response to her pet's loss reveal a child whose emotional needs are not being met. In a developmental sense, her constant focus on her best friend is in keeping with same-sex attachments common to girls in puberty, despite the mother's fear that it isn't normal. Perhaps the question arises as to how the teacher might have more effectively helped the girl gain her parents' understanding for her deep needs. As teachers at high schools with high Chinese populations reveal, much of the high standards and unrealistic expectations and unresponsive emotional settings common to Chinese-American students have caused even overachieving students to feel depressed and hopeless.

Connie's Outbursts

As the story progresses, more of Connie's behaviors reveal deep emotional disturbances with a long history. The intensity of her friendship turns to anger and jealousy. At the same time her jealousy over her parents' treatment of her brother Martin underscores the deep rage that surfaces in the parent-teacher encounter. Despite the strong cultural taboos on defying parents, Connie exploded in response to her mother's caution about friendship. We know from Lilly Siu's commentary that the issue of second class status for girls in Chinese culture is a very real issue, but even she acknowledges the seriousness of Connie's psychological problems.

Connie's needs may be a response to both cultural practices and personal needs which are not matched. Yet we sense that the teacher's style of emotional and caring support for Connie is not sufficient to balance the deficits in her home setting, and may even have brought new conflicts and pressures for Connie, as Connie is caught between teacher and parent expectations.

Closure

It is important to synthesize what we learned about the family and its role during critical moments in the case. Pursuing what they might have thought about key incidences even when the story doesn't reveal their attitudes helps us to frame this as a school-community case as well as a teacher-student relationship.

Suggested Discussion Outline

1. What were the most important issues in this case?
   Probes:
   a. Cultural?
   b. Instructional?
   c. Familial?
   d. Psychological?

2. The student's behavior changed drastically. What triggered it?
   Probes:
   a. How could it have been handled differently?
   b. What part did the parents play in this change?

3. The teacher's first intervention outside the classroom was to send them to the principal's office.
   Probes:
   a. How was this viewed?
   b. Why didn't it work?

   c. What were the risks and consequences of this decision?

4. Describe the parent encounter. What were key points, key information given?
   Probes:
   a. List some of the cultural issues, differences, conflicts that were present in the teacher-parent exchange (see Nelson-Barber commentary).
   b. What could have been done to enlist the parents' support?
   c. What might have happened if Connie hadn't participated in the conference?

5. What did Connie feel about the situation?
   Probes:
   a. About her teacher's help?
   b. About her parents' response?
   c. About her family situation (see Siu commentary)?
   d. What did she expect or need from the teacher?
   e. Discuss her response to competing messages from teacher and parents.

6. What made the teacher most uncomfortable in this situation?
   Probes:
   a. What was she afraid of?
   b. Why didn't she seek counseling assistance?
   c. What was she trying to accomplish for Connie? For the family? For herself?
   d. How did her communication style and values differ from the family?

7. At one point, the teacher attempts to convince the principal that this is a very serious situation (the suicide gesture), but the principal doesn't intervene. Why?
   Probes:
   a. What could have contributed to the principal's apparent lack of concern?
   b. What could the teacher have done at this point?

8. Why did Connie apologize to the teacher?
   Probes:
   a. What did it reflect about family and cultural values?
   b. How could the teacher have responded?
   c. How did Connie feel about it?

9. What other incidents or details make us think that things are not resolved with Connie, with her parents?
   Probes:
   a. What can we predict might happen to Connie in the years ahead?
   b. What do we think troubles the teacher most?

10. In the largest sense, what were the individual, familial and cultural issues at play in this case?

    Probes:

    a. What could the teacher have done to maintain trust with the student and parents?
    b. Was there a values conflict between home and school?
    c. What were the key points of rupture?
    d. What alternative interventions could the teacher have made? What would have been the risks and consequences of the intervention?

11. What have you learned from this case?

    Probes:

    a. What is the most important cultural knowledge you gained?
    b. What guiding principles came from this case?

Teaching Note

HOME VISITS

Introduction

This case begins with the impending absence of all 15 students from a housing project development who were supposed to participate in the San Francisco schools' arts program, organized by a group of volunteers. Though the faculty had warned the volunteers that they should send a bus to transport the students across the city for the performance, the volunteers ignored the warning because they felt sure the parents wouldn't let their children miss "so important an opportunity." But they were wrong; none of the students had appeared. So the organizers called this teacher-author to see if she could do anything to get the children to the park.

The rest of the case describes how and why this teacher was able to exert her influence with the community to enable the children to participate in their performance. In particular, it portrays the importance of establishing immediate and ongoing contact with students' families and lays some important ground rules for establishing those contacts. The case also illustrates why an inner-city teacher's enlarged role in his or her students' lives is so significant.

The author wrote this case because of her passionate belief in the importance of home contacts. As she said to the editors, "One of the problems in inner-city schools is that many teachers don't know how to reach out beyond the classroom into the personal lives of their students." While acknowledging the dangers of going into certain areas, she is convinced that careful preparation and sustained contact can preclude most risky situations.

The commentators react to this case from two very different perspectives. First, a white teacher illustrates that one does not have to be a teacher of color to develop meaningful personal relationships with their students and their families. Next, an educational anthropologist interprets the importance of such relationships from a scholarly perspective. Both viewpoints add substance and insight into potential analyses of the case.

Context

This case takes place in a large urban school where many students are bused in from a project housing development located in another part of the city. Though similar busing arrangements are common in urban areas and have many advantages, one of its side effects is a marked decrease in parent participation and involvement. Some teachers jump to the conclusion that these parents stay away from school because they simply don't care about their children's education. However, there are other explanations for their lack of attention, such as the time and money required to get to school by public transportation. Most families who live in project housing are headed by single mothers or grandmothers with very limited resources; they may not have the money to pay for baby-sitters or bus fare. Others may have work schedules that prohibit trips to schools across the city.

Segments of the Discussion

The Arts Program

Though the author intended to focus attention on the importance of and groundwork for initiating contacts with families, the first part of the discussion should explore the surface problem of the case: Why didn't the youngsters in the case show up for the performance? Some readers–particularly middle-class teachers who have had little or no prior experience with poor families in diverse settings–may be as baffled as the school volunteers in the case. According to their experience, such performances are usually very important events in the lives of children and their families, particularly when they are performed in prestigious public places. Thus, an unexamined interpretation could confirm a preconceived stereotype that parents in projects simply don't care about their children's education.

The parents' perspective. This discussion can be an interesting assessment of the participants' sensitivity to and experience with diverse communities. The facilitator should guide the group to examine the dilemma from the parents' perspective. If participants cannot come up with some rationales that make sense, asking a question like the following could help reframe the problem: Why might these parents be reluctant to send their children to participate in an outdoor event? Responses may include any of the following: a) most households are run by single mothers or grandmothers who have other responsibilities and cannot come to the performance; b) parents do not want to send their children unattended on a bus; c) parents are uncomfortable sending their children to an alien neighborhood unchaperoned; d) parents may neither know nor trust the persons in charge; and e) the children may not have told their parent(s) that the activity was important to them. This discussion may stimulate participants to remember their own fears about going to an alien neighborhood.

The event itself. It is important to emphasize that this arts event was organized and directed by school volunteers, not the teacher-author. Though the teacher and other faculty had predicted that the children would not show up without making arrangements for their transportation, the teachers could not control the situation; all arrangements were controlled by the volunteers.

Why Make Home Visits?

A large part of the discussion should focus on why home visits are so important to the students and families in inner-city schools. As Nelson-Barber points out in her commentary, it is becoming increasingly evident that, in many urban centers, effective teaching often means going beyond the traditional conception of "content to be taught." Many educators claim that success often depends on a teacher's ability to both forge meaningful relationships with their students and draw on local values and expectations about teaching and learning. These are skills that often cannot be honed within the confines of a classroom or a school, and requires that teachers attend to their students' broader social and familial contexts.

The teacher-author makes a strong case for initiating home contacts during the first few weeks of school, and for those interactions to be positive experiences. Such groundwork lays the foundation for any problems that might occur later on in the school year. This kind of direct involvement is also meaningful to families who "feel ignored or believe that they have little voice in the educational decisions for their children" (Nelson-Barber's commentary). It also increases a teacher's understanding of her students' behavior and her capacity to handle a disruptive child.

How to Initiate Contact

The author provides some ground rules for initiating contact with families who live in housing projects that may be particularly helpful to teachers who have little experience with such settings. Sensitivity to the local norms of behavior can make or break the success of any visit (note especially the author's account of going to a student's home to discuss a theft, but changed her plans when she met her student's great grandmother). It also lowers the risk of being at the right place at the wrong time, such as the author's description of "the classic robbery setup."

The author makes particular reference to the importance of the "Power Mom" or "Grandma," as she is often called, in predominantly African-American settings. These older women are prominent in many settings and have been a source of information and inspiration for many educators. The importance of women's roles in black settings can be traced to the historic position of women in the Baptist church, the socio-economic conditions that produces predominantly female, single-parent households, and the child-rearing practices that occur in extended families.

Should Direct Home Contact Be Part of a Teacher's Role?

What is the role of a teacher? Should direct home contact be included in that role? Some participants, especially secondary teachers who often teach over 100 students, argue that teachers can only be expected to teach content and that personal contacts with students and families lay outside of the role of teachers. While this description may fit the traditional conception of a teacher, the purpose of this case discussion is to encourage teachers to think more broadly. A current movement among many educators (e.g., Comer) calls for school restructuring that enables teachers to reach beyond their own classrooms and into the personal lives of their students and families. This is particularly important in inner-city settings where parental involvement and support cannot be taken for granted.

This conception of effective teaching is more time-consuming than the more traditional image. Discussions about what outreach is and/or can be, and how much is "enough" before "burn-out" are important. New teachers in particular may be overwhelmed with setting up new curricula and will need support on how to prioritize their time.

Some teachers may argue that visiting certain project developments is too dangerous, and that minority parents will be more accepting of minority teachers than of whites. Others don't give up so easily. One of the commentators, Joan Tibbetts, is a white teacher who wrote her own mini-case about how she established tutoring services in the projects with parental support. Both Tibbetts and the case author maintain that successful home visits depend on how these contacts are established and nurtured.

Conclusion

Discussion participants should be encouraged to share their own experiences about the advantages of establishing home contacts. At the end of the discussion, it may be useful to generate a list of both new insights and unanswered questions that were stimulated by the case analysis.

Suggested Discussion Outline

1. What were the facts of this case?

2. Why do you think the students didn't show up for the performance?
   Probes:
   a. Why might the students' parent[s] hesitate to send them to the performance?
   b. Why might the students be reluctant to participate in the performance?

3. The author makes a case for the importance of making direct contact with students' families early in the year. Do you agree?
   Probes:
   a. How much can we assume we can accomplish merely within the walls of our classrooms?
   b. What are the ramifications of busing and single-parent households for parent participation in schools?
   c. What are the realistic differences as to what can be accomplished between elementary and secondary teachers?

4. What are some of the strategies that the author used for making home contacts?
   Probes:
   a. What were the risks and consequences of each strategy?
   b. How did the author demonstrate sensitivity to the norms of behavior of the families (grandmother)?

5. What are some alternate strategies for making contact with your students' families?
   Probe:
   a. What are some of the risks and consequences of each one?

6. How do you think the parents in this case viewed the school?
   Probes:
   a. Do they trust the teachers? Why?
   b. Do they value their children's education? How would we know?
   c. What might prevent parents from becoming involved in their children's school activities and/or parent conferences?

7. Do you establish contact with your students' families? If yes:
   Probes:
   a. What do you do?
   b. Of what value are these contacts?
   c. What might prevent you from making contacts with parents?
   d. Of what value are home visits?

8. Are there any principles that we can generalize on the importance of and methods for making direct home contacts? Do you have any new insights and/or unanswered questions that were stimulated by the case analysis?

APPENDIX:

Table 1: Contributors to Casebook

Table 2: Features of Cases

LIST OF CASES

Case No.	**Case Title**
1	A Case of *Ganas*
2	Moments of Truth and Teaching *Pygmalion*
3	Life Lesson
4	A Painful Reflection
5	Some Lessons Learned
6	Please, Not Another ESL Student
7	Fighting for Life in Third Period
8	A Difficult Year
9	Darius: I Hope He Makes It!
10	A Trip to Hell
11	From "Outsider" to Active Learner: Struggles in a Newcomer School
12	An Unanswered Dilemma
13	Opening Pandora's Box: The Mystery Behind an "Ideal" Student
14	Home Visits

TABLE 1: CONTRIBUTORS TO CASEBOOK

Dimensions	Case No.*													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
AUTHOR**														
Anglo-American	X	X		X	X	X	X						X	
Chinese-American			X											
Japanese-American											X			
Mexican-American												X		
Filipino/Mex. American									X	X				X
COMMENTATORS														
Ethnic Background														
Anglo-American	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X		X-3		X
Mexican-American	X		X							X		X		
Japanese-American	X			X		X				X	X	X	X	
African-American		X					X	X-3	X					
Chinese-American													X	
African-Amer./Native Amer.											X		X	X
Sex														
Male	X-2									X-2		X		
Female	X	X-2	X-2	X-2		X	X-2	X-3	X-2	X	X-2	X-4	X-2	X-2

*See List of Cases on previous page for case titles.

**Since there was only one male case writer, we alleged that all the cases were written by females to protect anonymity.

TABLE 1: CONTRIBUTORS TO CASEBOOK (cont'd)

Dimensions	Case No.													
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**
Position														
Teacher	X	X	X				X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Staff Developer	X			X		X		X			X	X		
Administrator												X		
Educational Scholar	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X-2	X	X-2	X	X

TABLE 2: FEATURES OF CASES

Dimensions	Case No.													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
CONTEXT														
Grade Level														
Elementary			X		X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Middle	X			X		X								
High		X					X							
Bilingual						X				X	X	X		
Students														
Mexican-American	X					X				X	X			
Japanese-American												X		
Chinese-American													X	
Korean-American					X									
African-American		X					X	X	X					
Other (Norwegian)				X										
FOCUS OF CASE														
Individual Student	X			X	X			X	X		X		X	
Parents/Community												X	X	X
Instruction [Subject Area]														
English	X	X												
Social/Emotional			X											

TABLE 2: FEATURES OF CASES (cont'd)

Dimensions	**Case No.**													
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**
Instruction [Subject Area]														
ESL Science						X								
Spanish Enrichment										X				
Language														
LEP	X									X				
No English (New Immigrant)				X	X	X								
MAJOR ELEMENTS/ISSUES														
Nurtured Personal Relationship														
Student	X						X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Family								X						X
Insights Into Family & Community														
Mexican-American	X										X			
African-American		X					X	X	X					
Chinese-American													X	
Japanese-American												X		
Cross-Cultural														X

TABLE 2: FEATURES OF CASES (cont'd)

Dimensions	Case No.													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Insights Into Teacher-Author														
Dilemmas	X			X	X		X	X				X		
Individual vs. Group (Attention)	X							X			X			
Self-Doubt, Inadequate Knowledge	X			X	X		X						X	
Administration									X					
Discomfort with Content		X												
"Losing Face"												X	X	
Recognition of Personal Bias		X					X							
Color-Blind		X					X							
Seeks Outside Help (Counselors, Administrators, Other Teachers)				X	X		X	X				X	X	
Communicates With Family				X	X			X			X	X	X	X
Insights Into Students														
Desire to Learn	X	X					X	X	X		X			
Troubles at Home							X	X	X		X		X	
Desire to Please	X		X						X				X	
Home/School Stress		X					X	X	X		X		X	

TABLE 2: FEATURES OF CASES (cont'd)

Dimensions	Case No.													
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**
Difficulties With Cross-Cultural Communication														
Students		X					X	X		X			X	
Parents												X	X	X
Limited English					X								X	
Issues (Other)														
Gender	X						X						X	
Self-Esteem			X					X		X				
Reflections on Racism		X					X							
Political										X				
Function of Consent Decree										X				
Function of Bilingual Education										X				
Parental Control												X		
Language and Culture		X					X							X
African-American Males		X					X	X	X					
Retention								X						